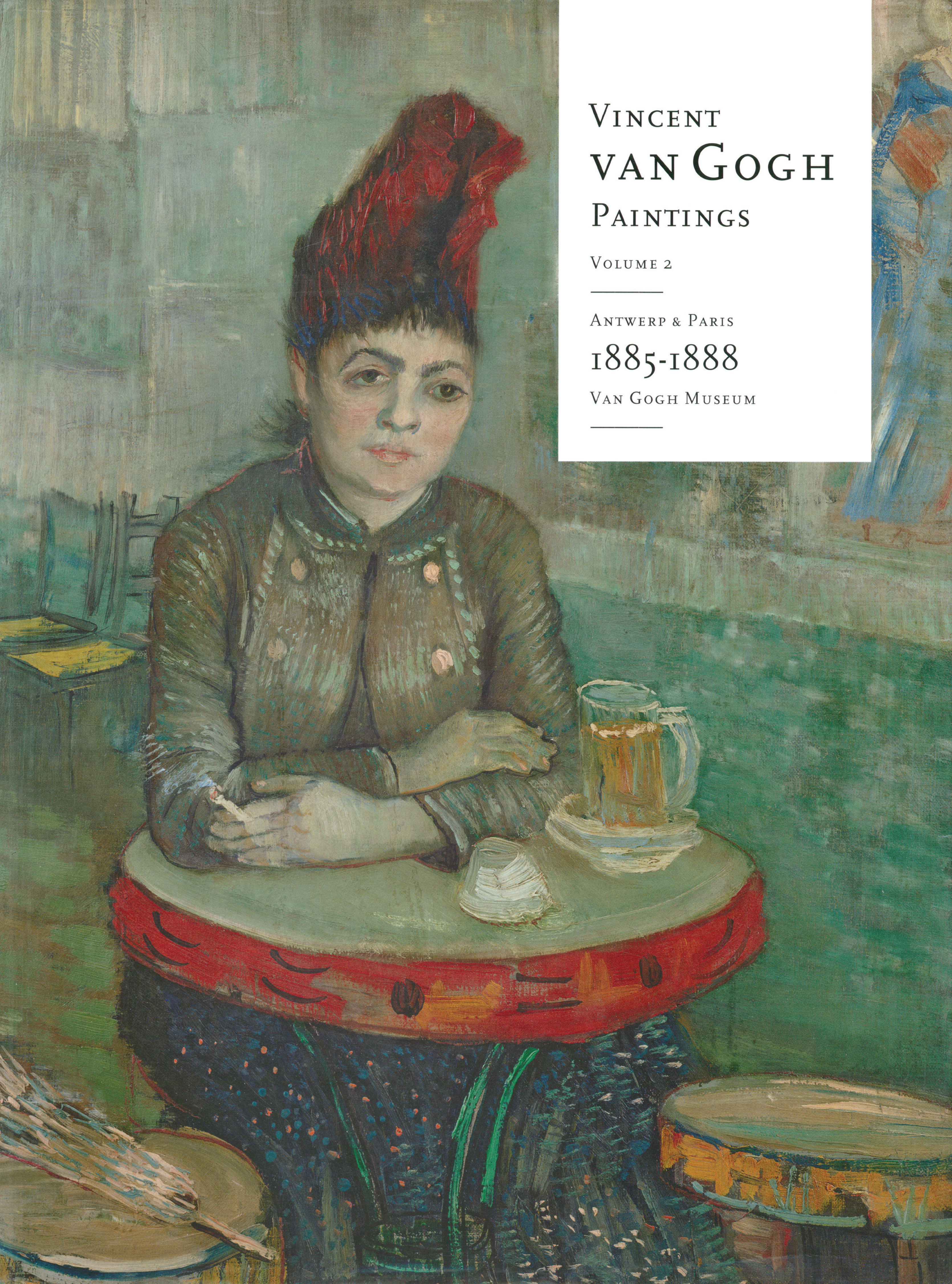


Vincent van Gogh Paintings

Volume 2

Antwerp & Paris

1885-1888

Van Gogh Museum

Vincent van Gogh

Paintings

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Van Gogh Museum

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Cultural Heritage Agency
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

Vincent
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Front: Vincent van Gogh, *In the café: Agostina Segatori in Le Tambourin*, 1887, Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum
Back: Vincent van Gogh, *Boulevard de Clichy*, 1887, Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum

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Foreword

Collaboration between the art historian, the conservator and the scientist has become increasingly important in the past few decades. Not only has it become standard practice in the Van Gogh Museum, but it is now inconceivable that a museum would fail to apply this integrated approach to its collection catalogues. The physical and technical research carried out for the 1999 volume on Van Gogh's Dutch paintings was still modest in scale, but the fully integrated approach was pursued from the very start in the present one, which deals with the paintings from Antwerp and Paris, and the degree and depth of research is more exhaustive. When the museum decided in the early 1990s, under the directorship of Ronald de Leeuw, to produce a series of collection catalogues of its core holdings, the paintings and drawings by Van Gogh belonging to the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, it was recognised that this could only be conducted on a grand scale. But the totally integrated approach raised the bar even higher, and it was realised that this goal could only be achieved with the support of others. Since 2000, when this project started, the close collaboration with the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage (ICN), incorporated in the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE) from 2011, and the Institute for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Dynamics in Amsterdam, as well as the contribution of the De Mayerne research programme supported by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) have benefited us in many ways, and I would like to thank all those involved for their unconditional assistance. Without it we would not have been able to attain our ideals.

Furthermore, we would not have been able to fulfil our research ambitions and lift this catalogue to the desired level without the immense support of our sponsor, Shell, Partner in Science to the Van Gogh Museum, which took the initiative to propose a scientific collaboration in early 2000. We gratefully acknowledge the unflagging commitment of past Shell Nederland Country Chairs Henk Dijkgraaf and Rein Willems, and present Country Chair Peter de Wit, as well as past – André Smit and Petra van Rijn – and present – Klaas Engelsma – Social Investment Officers, The Hague Office, whose joint efforts have ensured continued backing for this research.

The collaboration with Shell began in 2000 with the research conducted for this catalogue, and has expanded since 2005 into the broader scope of the current project, *Van Gogh's studio practice*. Interaction over the years with specialists at the Shell Technology Centre in Amsterdam (STCA) has proved a highly inspiring and productive experience. Special mention is due to the following individuals who have devoted so much of their own time and energy to the project: Kees Mensch for his SEM-EDS analysis of samples of Van Gogh's paints; Ralph Haswell for developing quantitative SEM-EDS methods for measuring the proportion of ingredients present in ground layers; Arie Meruma for his statistical processing of thread count data gathered from the study of Van Gogh's canvases; Onno de Noord for his advice

on the statistical analysis of wide-ranging technical data gathered from the examination of paintings; and Wim Genuit, who has been the focal point of the research efforts at STCA. Finally, we owe a considerable debt of gratitude to Rob Bouwman for the unfailing enthusiasm, energy and wisdom he has brought to the project in his capacity as principal coordinator between the Van Gogh Museum and Shell, Partner in Science.

Equally, we are indebted to our other main scientific partner for this project, the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE). A major contribution was provided by Muriel Geldof, who carried out the mammoth task of preparing around 266 paint cross-sections, which she examined using optical microscopy and analysed with SEM-EDS performed with Kees Mensch at STCA. We benefited enormously from her expertise and connoisseurship of paint samples. Binding medium analysis was conducted by RCE colleagues Henk van Keulen, Suzan de Groot and Maarten van Bommel. Van Bommel also identified, even the tiniest traces of organic lake pigments present in paint samples. Their work was essential to the making of this catalogue, underpinning many of the new insights put forward in the essays and entries. In 2005, this existing collaboration motivated a new partnership between the Van Gogh Museum and the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands investigating the studio practices of Van Gogh.

Furthermore, it should be noted that almost all the works by Van Gogh in the museum belong to the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, as do the documents in the museum's keeping. The Foundation's collection is on permanent loan to the museum, and we are grateful to its board for the trust reposed in us.

This publication, besides being the catalogue of a significant part of our collection, is in many ways intended as a new standard work of reference for Van Gogh's artistic development in Antwerp and Paris, and I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all within the museum who have contributed so much enthusiasm, time and energy to the myriad aspects covered by a publication of this kind, which are too numerous to mention here in detail. In particular I would like to congratulate the two principal authors, Ella Hendriks and Louis van Tilborgh, Senior Conservator and Senior Researcher, on this enormous achievement. Not only have they worked tirelessly and devoted many years of their professional lives to this project, but they were also both awarded their PhDs for the research that forms the basis of the catalogue. We are deeply grateful to both of them for writing this book, thereby further enhancing the Van Gogh Museum's reputation as a centre of scholarly expertise in the field of Van Gogh studies. As ever, our thanks also go to our Head of Publications, Suzanne Bogman, and her team for ensuring that this catalogue once again meets the high standards set by our previous publications. We are also grateful to Roelant Hazewinkel and Peter van der Ploeg, director and publisher respectively at Waanders Publishers, who expressed their faith in the project from the outset. Following on the two weighty volumes that make up the collection catalogue of Van Gogh's drawings from Arles, Saint-Rémy and Auvers-sur-Oise, this is yet another indisputable pinnacle in the long history of our collaboration.

Axel Rüger
Director

Introduction

The research for this book encompassed the 93 paintings from the Antwerp and Paris periods housed in the collection of the Van Gogh Museum. Each of these pictures was subjected to an extensive art-historical and technical investigation between 2000 and 2006, and it is those joint findings that are presented here. They are referred to as cats. 45-137, following on from the 44 paintings from the Dutch period catalogued in Louis van Tilborgh and Marije Vellekoop, *Vincent van Gogh. Paintings, vol. 1: Dutch period 1881-1885. Van Gogh Museum* (Amsterdam & Blaricum 1999).

The highly interdisciplinary nature of the project, in which we aimed above all to integrate the interpretation of technical and art-historical findings, made it complex in both an intellectual and practical sense. We are therefore particularly grateful to the former Director of the Van Gogh Museum and now Director General of the National Galleries of Scotland, John Leighton, to our former Head of Collections, Sjraar van Heugten, to Head of Research, Chris Stolwijk, and to the present Director, Axel Rüger, for granting us the space and time to bring the project to such a satisfying conclusion in the form of this book.

At the end of 2006, when the research and the manuscript were largely complete, we were fortunate to be asked by Prof. Evert van Uitert to submit our main findings as a dissertation at the University of Amsterdam. We accepted, and our two-volume thesis, entitled *New views on Van Gogh's development in Antwerp and Paris. An integrated art historical and technical study of his paintings in the Van Gogh Museum*, was successfully defended on 15 November 2006. We would like to thank him again for his infectious enthusiasm, which stimulated our research efforts in the museum. Based upon his own expert knowledge of Van Gogh and interest in matters of artists' technique, he offered valuable guidance and feedback during the process of rewriting. We also thank Prof. Ernst van de Wetering, who, in an extremely busy year, was willing to act as co-promoter. The dissertation served as the forerunner to the present book.

The manuscript has been updated since then, although without drastically revising the original text. We have attempted to incorporate new findings that resulted from our own ongoing lines of investigation or from the application of the latest methods developed for scientific research, as well as some that appeared in recent publications such as Leo Jansen, Hans Luijten and Nienke Bakker (eds.), *Vincent van Gogh. The Letters*, Amsterdam and The Hague 2009: www.vangoghletters.org. This book differs from the dissertation in that it describes all 93 works, not just a selection (see also 'Note to the reader'), and has six rather than seven introductory essays.

The works in Amsterdam were of course the focus of our study, yet since these constitute almost half the artist's production from late 1885 to early 1888, we hope

that our findings take on a significance beyond the scope of the collection in the Van Gogh Museum. The various introductory essays therefore differ in character. Those on the history of the collection, the treatment history of the collection and the chronology provide a seemingly straightforward inventory of facts, but others, including the essays *From Realist to modernist. Van Gogh meets the Parisian avant-garde* and *Developing technique and style*, are more interpretative and place information in a broader context.

At first sight *Van Gogh's working practice: a technical study* might also be seen as belonging to the first and not the second category, providing a factual account of the painter's working procedure that is supported by the detailed technical evidence given in tables. However, it should be pointed out that, in fact, several steps have been taken to interpret analytical and visual data in order to arrive at the findings presented here. Not all of these stages are detailed within the context of this book. Practical constraints mean that it is not possible to present and discuss the large number of analytical spectra (notably the SEM-EDS elemental spectra used to identify pigments in paint cross-sections), to provide the complete results of light microscopy on paint sample cross-sections, or to support all the visual observations with illustrations, for example. The full documentation of analysis and examinations performed may be consulted at the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage (ICN), which was incorporated in the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE) in 2011, and at the Van Gogh Museum.

Looking back on the project, our hope was to provide a significant new contribution towards understanding Van Gogh's artistic development in this crucial period of his career after Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov's pioneering dissertation *Vincent van Gogh. His Paris period 1886-1888*, published in 1976. Like Welsh-Ovcharov, we argue that Van Gogh's development took place in clear-cut stages, each of which was inspired by different artists, but in this book the relative importance of these various influences is weighted differently. Also, whereas Welsh-Ovcharov describes this process as one of progressive assimilation from one stylistic phase to the next, we disagree with her view that there was no 'clear-cut abandonment of an influence once explored'. Although to some extent one could see this as a play of words, here it is argued that such a decisive moment did take place, namely in the winter of 1886-87. In our eyes, that period marks the beginning of Van Gogh's social *and* artistic integration with the young Parisian avant-garde.

Furthermore, we suggest that his transformation from a Realist with an idealistic message in the tradition of Millet into a true modernist wishing to build upon the achievements of the Impressionists was not the logical outcome of a process that started in his Dutch years. Studying the works from an art-historical and technical point of view, one realises above all that the development of Van Gogh's oeuvre was the result of several, sometimes contradictory aspects. One might point, for example, to the need to sell his work, his altered feeling for art, his growing artistic skills, his wish for a more professional approach, the quest for modernity in terms of his materials and techniques, the search for a truly personal and original style, and his constant interest in practice above theory. If one wants to understand his art, the relative importance of all these factors has to be weighed anew in the case of each individual work, and this is an interesting task for art historians and conservators

alike. It was Van Gogh's wish that no one should ever be bored by his art, and we certainly never yawned in the process of our research into his development as a painter in his Antwerp and Paris years.

Acknowledgements

It is clear from the many individuals involved that teamwork is essential to the making of a collection catalogue. All of those listed below have contributed essential knowledge from their own field of specialisation, each of which is subject to its own subtleties of interpretation. Above all, we are grateful to Monique Hageman from our own museum for compiling the documentary information, and to Margriet van Eikema Hommes, currently researcher at the RCE and at the University of Amsterdam, for her assistance in incorporating technical findings in the catalogue entries. Without them this book could never have taken shape.

Topographical research was undertaken at an early stage by our colleagues Nienke Bakker, now Curator of Exhibitions, and subsequently Jan Gorm Madsen, now curator at the Hirschsprung Collection in Copenhagen. Furthermore, information relating to Montmartre was kindly provided by Gérard Jouhet, André Roussard and Bernard Vassor, all in Paris. Unless otherwise stated, descriptions of clothing are based on information provided by Frieda Sorber (Provinciaal Textiel Museum, Ranst) and Henri Vannoppen.

A special word of thanks is due to C.M. den Nijs. Together with J.G.B. Oostermeijer and A.C. Ellis-Adam, all of the Institute for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Dynamics, University of Amsterdam, he attempted to identify all the plants, trees, shrubs and flowers depicted in the paintings, and helped with related queries concerning works in other collections. The outcome was rewarding in many ways, and we hope to benefit again from their extensive knowledge for the third and last catalogue on Van Gogh's paintings in our museum.

The broad technical and analytical study that we conducted was made possible by the collaboration of several institutions offering essential resources, and at an individual level wide-ranging expertise. At the Van Gogh Museum, all the works were subjected to detailed technical examination by Ella Hendriks and Natasha Walker, currently paintings conservator at Tate Britain. Frans Stive assisted with infrared imaging, employing the ARTIST multi-spectral imaging camera and software developed by Art Innovation, Hengelo. The camera was purchased with generous contributions from Art Innovation and Shell Nederland. The analysis of paint samples was performed by colleagues at the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands, in collaboration with scientists at The Shell Centre for Technology in Amsterdam.

Other input came from researchers participating in the De Mayerne Programme, a research programme on molecular studies in conservation and technical studies in art history (2001-06) supported by NWO (Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research). This included a project entitled *The painting materials and techniques of Vincent van Gogh* coordinated by Ella Hendriks as principal investigator. Within this project, Beatrice Marino employed advanced imaging analytical techniques combined with quantifying software for a highly detailed examination and comparison of ground samples from a number of Van Gogh's Paris pictures on *carton*

supports. Her findings were written up in the dissertation, *Paints quantified: image analytical studies of preparatory grounds used by Van Gogh*, supervised by Prof. J.J. Boon at the AMOLF-FOM Institute for Atomic and Molecular Physics, University of Amsterdam, and published in 2006. Stéphanie Constantin surveyed French archival and documentary sources relating to the supply and manufacture of painting materials used by Van Gogh. When combined with technical findings, this new-found documentary information helped to reconstruct the artist's working practice in the period, situating it within the wider context of his day. Also within the De Mayerne Programme, historically accurate replicas of a selection of Van Gogh's primed canvases and tube paints were made by Leslie Carlyle and her team in the HART project (acronym for Historically Accurate Reconstructions of Oil Painters' Materials), which included Maartje Witlox, Kathrin Pilz, Meta Chavannes and Brian Baade. The recipes for the ground reconstructions were partly derived from quantitative SEM-EDX analysis of ground samples from Van Gogh's paintings performed by Ralph Haswell at STCA. The process of making these composite reconstructions has greatly increased our understanding of the visual and working properties of the materials used by Van Gogh and his contemporaries. Historically accurate reconstructions were also employed for artificial ageing tests in an experimental study on the fading and deterioration of red lake paints as used by Van Gogh. Key participants in this broad collaborative project were Klaas Jan van den Berg, Leslie Carlyle and Mark Clarke from RCE, Aviva Burnstock and Ibby Lanfear from the Department of Conservation and Technology at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London, Jo Kirby from the National Gallery in London, and Ella Hendriks from the Van Gogh Museum.

In addition, Jenny Barnett, freelance textile conservator in Amsterdam, characterised the twill fabric used by Van Gogh, whilst Inge Fiedler and Eva Schuchardt at the Art Institute of Chicago analysed samples of fibre from several canvases, complementing the results provided by Muriel Geldof at RCE. Philippe Huyvaert, president of Fa. V.A. Claessens in Waregem, Belgium, generously took the time to guide us round his company's premises and share his knowledge of the historical techniques for priming canvas that are still used there today. Prof. Anthea Callen at Nottingham University in the UK provided essential background information for the section on Van Gogh's picture supports, as well as valuable comments on earlier versions of the text. At the AMOLF-FOM Institute for Atomic and Molecular Physics in Amsterdam, Jaap J. Boon, Jerre van der Horst, and Stephan and Ana Schaefer performed DMTS analysis of samples of the wax-resin adhesive used to line Van Gogh's paintings early in the 20th century.

Other colleagues in the field of conservation kindly went out of their way to supply information at our request: Luuk Struick van der Loeff at the Kröller-Müller Museum, Elisabeth Bracht at the Stedelijk Museum, Sabrina Meloni at the Mauritshuis, Mireille te Marvelde at the Frans Hals Museum, Inge Fiedler and Kristin Hoermann-Lister at the Art Institute of Chicago, Elke Oberthaler at the Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kate Lowry at the Amgueddfa Cymru (National Museum Wales), Aviva Burnstock at the Courtauld Institute in London, and Jo Kirby at the National Gallery in London. Carel Eckmann painstakingly transformed the large tables with technical data into a readable layout.

In 2006, the museum entered into a highly productive collaboration with experts in the field of electrical engineering, aiming to develop new methods for the automated analysis of canvas weaves revealed in X-rays. This ongoing Threadcount Automation Project, co-directed by Prof. C.R. Johnson Jr. of Cornell University and emeritus Prof. D.H. Johnson of Rice University, USA, working together with Prof. Robert G. Erdmann, University of Arizona, has led to many exciting new discoveries. However, due to time constraints for the publication of this catalogue it has not been possible to incorporate all of them in the final manuscript, though some important examples are given in the entries.

In addition to those mentioned above, we are indebted to the assistance of other colleagues at the Van Gogh Museum: Frans Stive, Alex Nikken and Serge Taal for their untiring help and willingness to fetch and unframe paintings as required; to Leo Jansen, Hans Luijten and Teio Meedendorp for their comments on even the most trivial matters; and to Fieke Pabst, Patricia Schuil and Anita Vriend for their help in checking facts. At various stages of writing, Marije Vellekoop, Nienke Bakker, Hans Luijten, Leo Jansen, Chris Stolwijk and René Boitelle all provided commentary on the written texts, and we are grateful for their generous yet critical response. Fred Leeman, independent art historian in Amsterdam, kindly answered all our questions concerning Emile Bernard. Richard Thomson, Watson Gordon Professor of Fine Art at the University of Edinburgh, supplied us with specific information on Toulouse-Lautrec, while Wouter van der Veen, now working as Lecturer in Dutch Culture and History at the University of Strasbourg, assisted with queries on French literature. Nienke Bakker, Monique Hageman, Hans Luijten and Teio Meedendorp took the trouble to read the final manuscript and recommend essential changes, and Renske Suijver was so kind as to check all the references. Suzanne Bogman, Geri Klazema and Anja Wisseborn of the Publications Department contributed their essential expertise by transforming computer texts into an elegant book with more than 500 reproductions. Without them and designer Marjo Starink this publication would not have turned out to be such a feast for the eye. All the paintings in our museum were digitally photographed by Thijs Quispel, and our thanks are due to him, as well as to Mariëlle Gerritsen and Maurice Tromp, coordinator and image colour manager respectively, and to Jan de Ruiter and Benno Slijkhuis of Èpos Press, for bringing Van Gogh's works so vividly alive on the pages of this book. In addition, we are grateful to Peter van der Ploeg and Carijn Oomkes of Waanders Publishers, Zwolle, who skilfully supervised the publication as publisher and coordinator.

Last, but certainly not least, we extend our gratitude to our editor and translator, Michael Hoyle, who not only saved us from making many mistakes and contradictory remarks but also ensured that our detailed information was transformed into a succinct text that is a pleasure to read. He succeeded brilliantly in avoiding the pitfall of adopting a monotonous tone dictated by the limited choice of words at our disposal to describe the style and technique of works. Furthermore, he bore with us right up to the last moment, responding to our comments in the proper academic way – critically.

It is difficult to separate work and private lives, even more so when it involves long-term projects like this one. The project had its inevitable ups and downs, but

we were always encouraged by our friends and family, especially our respective partners, Hans and Tomoko. In 2006, we dedicated the dissertation to our sons, David and Lodewijk, but they now have to make way for our beloved parents who departed from us in recent years: Henk Hendriks (1925-2009), Jo van Tilborgh (1921-2006) and Truus van Tilborgh-Briedé (1926-2010). They raised us, encouraged us in our enthusiasm for the arts, and we dedicate this book to their memory.

Amsterdam, March 2011
Ella Hendriks & Louis van Tilborgh

The history of the collection: exchanges, gifts, sales and the sacrosanct core

Louis van Tilborgh

Van Gogh made around 200 paintings during his time in Antwerp and Paris, 93 of which are now in the Van Gogh Museum: 6 from the Antwerp period and 87 from Paris (cats. 45-50 and 51-137).[1] They amount to all but one of the surviving Belgian oeuvre and almost half the Paris output. There are characteristic examples of all the genres and the artistic phases that Van Gogh went through, so the museum's collection forms an excellent basis for charting his amazing and rapid transformation from a peasant painter in the tradition of Jean-François Millet to an unconventional modernist in thrall to Japanese prints.

To take just a few examples, the paintings include portraits of ladies of easy virtue influenced by Rubens and Jordaens (cats. 47, 48); his only surviving figure piece in oils from the spring of 1886, when he was studying with the Paris history painter Cormon (cat. 51); four flower still lifes from the summer of that year in which he experimented with a bold palette and rough manner in imitation of Adolphe Monticelli (cats. 68-71); his first tentative efforts in early 1887 to follow in the footsteps of the Neo-Impressionists by working with small, distinct dots of colour (cats. 81, 82, 90-95); two of his four paintings in which he followed the example of the French Realists and Impressionists by depicting the café and restaurant life of Paris (cats. 84, 90); and his three remarkable translations of Japanese prints, which were prompted by his need to subordinate perspective to decorative effects (cats. 131-33).

The collection also contains a sizeable number of self-portraits (cats. 52, 74-77, 97, 98, 116-20, 122, 125, 129, 130, 137), most of which are exercises in colour and form, but which do include one fully-fledged painting (cat. 137), and last but not least two of the three large pictures which Van Gogh exhibited in 1888 in the Théâtre Libre founded by André Antoine and at the exhibition of Les Indépendants (cats. 104, 115). In addition to these ambitious works there are many small and charming nature studies like *Horse chestnut tree in blossom* (cat. 103; see also cats. 105, 106, 109) and several experimental pieces, including the ten interesting exercises after plaster casts (cats. 57-63, 85-87) and *Prawns and mussels* (cat. 72).

Sales, exchanges, gifts

But however large and rich it may be, there are certainly gaps in the museum's collection. For example, there is not a single specimen from 1886 of Van Gogh's many park scenes and views of the Moulin de la Galette, the entertainment centre on the hill of Montmartre. His most colourful flower pieces are in other collections, nor does the museum have any of his systematically Pointillist paintings from May 1887, unless one counts the slightly earlier *View from Theo's apartment* (cat. 95) or the less dogmatic *Garden with courting couples: Square Saint-Pierre* (cat. 104).[2] There are only one unfinished and two small samples of the many river views painted

1 It is only possible to give a rough estimate of Van Gogh's output in this period, since the authenticity of several of the paintings listed in the oeuvre catalogues still has to be investigated (see Appendix 2). In addition to the 93 from Antwerp and Paris, the museum has 44 from his Dutch period (1880-late 1885; see Paintings 1, cats. 1-44) and 73 from Arles, Saint-Rémy and Auvers-sur-Oise (early 1888-90). The studies executed in Nuenen with backs painted in Paris, six in all (cats. 114, 116-20), are counted twice, once each in the Dutch and Paris oeuvres.

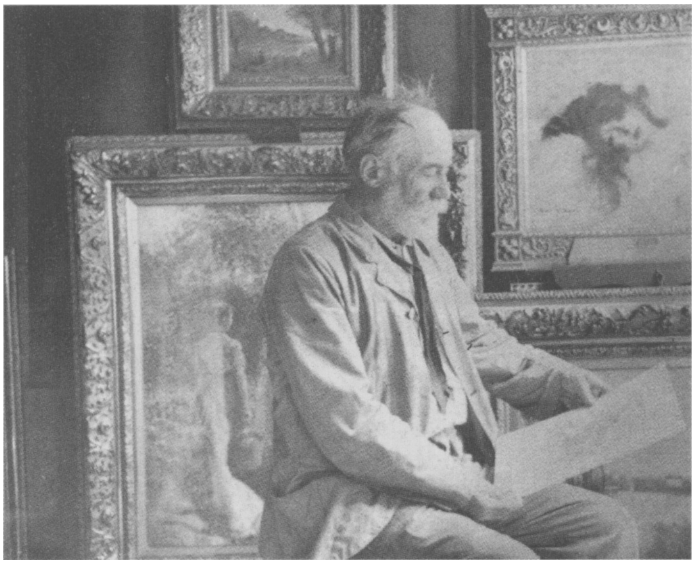
2 The markedly Pointillist works are F 276 JH 1259, F 342 JH 1256 and F 361 JH 1260.



1 Adolphe-Felix Cals, *Portrait of Pierre-Firmin Martin*, 1878. Honfleur, Musée Eugène Boudin.



2 *Portrait of Julien Tanguy* (F 363 JH 1351), 1887. Paris, Musée Rodin.



3 Photograph of Alphonse Portier. From Paris 1988, p. 339.

near Asnières (cats. 106-08), which might mislead visitors into thinking that the work Van Gogh did in this village near Paris was of only minor importance.

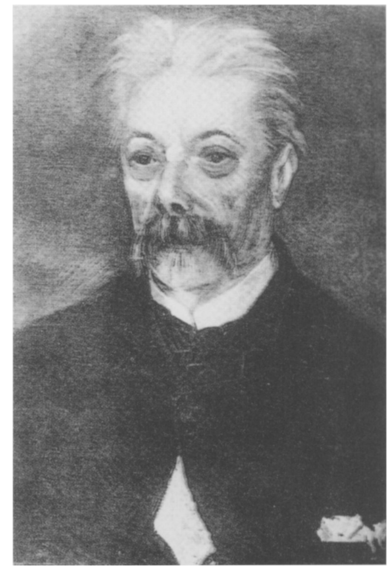
The reason for these omissions is simple: Van Gogh's paintings soon became dispersed, even when he was still alive, and it is difficult to reconstruct the process. His need to sell his work had become increasingly acute towards the end of his stay in Nuenen, and when he arrived in Antwerp he immediately got in touch with local art dealers.[3] Although he did not sell anything, as far as we know, he remained optimistic and continued to do the same in Paris.[4] Several paintings from that period are signed, mainly flower still lifes and views of the city and windmills, from which it can be inferred that they, in particular, were intended for sale.[5] It is known that in the summer of 1886 he left works with a number of smaller dealers whom he had probably got to know through his brother. They were Pierre-Firmin Martin (1817-91; fig. 1), who specialised in paintings by the Barbizon School but who also sold

3 Van Gogh's constantly changing views on when his art was ready to be displayed to the outside world are briefly discussed in Van Tilborgh/Van Uitert 1990, pp. 15-26. See also pp. 53-55.
4 Letter 546.
5 It is difficult to investigate this systematically. The history of the signed works is often incomplete, and strictly speaking we do not know whether they were sold, given away or exchanged. In most cases, too (apart from those in the Van Gogh Museum), it is not known whether Van Gogh wrote the signatures when the paint was still wet or added them later.

work by Johan Barthold Jongkind and Impressionists, and whose adopted daughter sat to Van Gogh for her portrait in 1887 (cat. 96); Georges Thomas (?-after 1908), a former wine merchant about whom little is known but who later sold works by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and Louis Anquetin; Julien Tanguy (1825-94; fig. 2), who mainly sold artists' materials but also dealt in paintings, by Cézanne, among others; and probably Alphonse Portier (1841-1902; fig. 3), an important acquaintance of Theo's who had worked at Durand-Ruel and was in direct touch with Edgar Degas, Claude Monet and others.[6]

As far as is known Van Gogh only actually sold anything through Tanguy: a portrait for 20 francs, 30 less than he wanted for it (fig. 4).[7] Most works left his studio as exchanges,[8] not so much because he wanted to build up his own collection of modern art but in order to become better known in his new home. 'His paintings are getting so much better and he is beginning to exchange them for ones by other painters, that's how it must gradually come about,' as his sister Willemien wrote in August 1886.[9] Like him, those other painters were foreigners and thus newcomers on the Paris art market. They included the American Frank Myers Boggs, a business associate of Theo's, and several fellow students at Cormon's studio: the Spaniard Fabian de Castro, the Algerian-born Charles Antoine, also called Antonio Cristobal, and the Australian John Russell.[10] The latter exchanged either his portrait of Van Gogh or a nude study for a still life with shoes (figs. 5, 6).[11] Antoine gave Van Gogh a study of a young girl, Boggs two seascapes and Fabian a landscape, but it is not known which works of Van Gogh they got in return, although they were very probably Paris street scenes or views of windmills.[12]

Although Van Gogh had already tried to organise an exchange with a French artist in 1886, Charles Angrand, his relations with local painters only became sufficiently personal for exchanges in the course of the following year.[13] Those willing to do so may well have included Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and certainly Emile



4 *Portrait of a man* (F 288 JH 1200), 1886-87. Whereabouts unknown.

6 Van Gogh said that four dealers were involved in letter 569 from the autumn of 1886, and it is assumed that he meant these four, partly on evidence in his ater correspondence (Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 213-17, Nonne 1988, Nonne 2000, pp. 45, 46). See also Theo's letter of August 1886 to their mother in which he also spoke of four dealers (b 942). He wrote that one of them had 'already taken four of his paintings' ('al vier van zijn schilderijen genomen') and had promised 'to hold an exhibition of his work next year' ('het volgend jaar een expositie van zijn werk te houden'). Vincent was probably also in touch with Athanase Bague (1843-93), who had founded the firm of Bague & Cie with several partners in 1873, as emerges from the later correspondence (letters 699, 700 and 702).

7 That painting, described in letter 638, is F 288 JH 1200. The only alternative is F 209 JH 1201, but Ronald Pickvance rightly argued against its authenticity (Pickvance 2006, p. 501). The price of 50 francs is mentioned in letters 569 and 640.

8 Van Gogh reported this for the first time in his letter of September or October 1886: 'I have exchanged studies with several artists' [569].

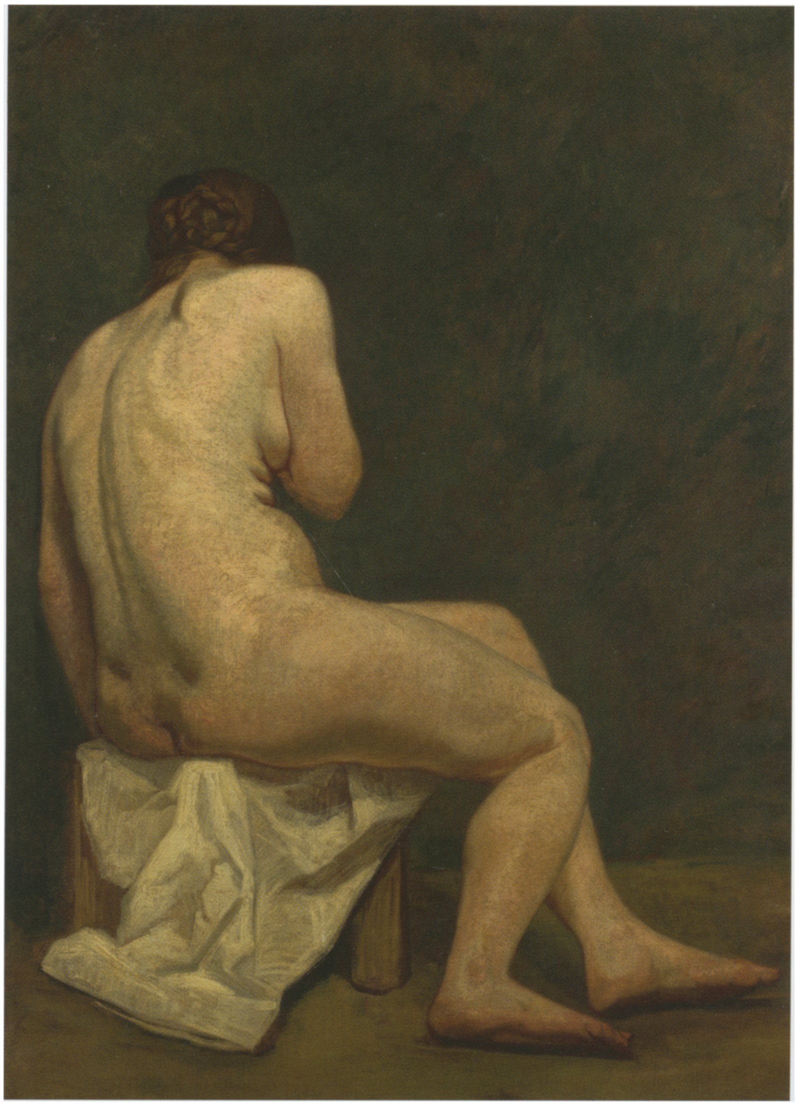
9 Letter of 26 August 1886 to Line Kruysse (b 4536): 'Zijn schilderijen worden zooveel beter en hij begint ze te verruilen tegen die van andere schilders, zoo moet 't langsamerhand komen'. She based this on a letter from Theo to their mother (b 942).

10 The family collection contains the following paintings by them: two seascapes by Boggs (inv. s 212, s 213); an 1886 portrait of a woman by Antoine (inv. s 203); a portrait of Van Gogh and a nude study by Russell (inv. s 262, s 273), and a small landscape scene of Montmartre by Fabian (inv. s 218) (unless F 233 JH 1180, which is no longer attributed to Van Gogh, is also a work by this artist; see Appendix 1). The first four bear dedications to Vincent, while the last three do not, but it is unlikely that Theo bought them. The artists may have given them to Vincent without taking anything in return, but that is mainly a theoretical possibility and is ignored here. It is known that not only Russell but Antoine and Fabian as well were pupils of Cormon from Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 56, notes 26 and 27, and Destremau 1996, pp. 174, 175, note 34 on p. 182, and p. 184.

11 Russell's nude study has hitherto been attributed to an anonymous artist, but a description in a bill relating to it from the restorer J.C. Traas of January 1930 (b 4208) and the manner of execution, especially of the draperies, indicate that it is his work, although that attribution is not entirely trusted by Galbally 2008, p. 274, note 30. It is known that he owned Van Gogh's *Shoes* from the sale of his estate at the Hôtel Drouot in Paris on 31 March 1920 (lot 62). According to his son Lionel he had another Van Gogh about which nothing further is known, but he may have been mistaken (Albie Thoms, 'Brothers of the brush', in Sydney/Queensland 2001-02, p. 53).

12 If one takes Van Gogh's *signed* canvases from this period with a provenance other than the family collection and rules out still lifes, since apart from Antoine and Russell his colleagues supplied 'landscape subjects', then the eligible works are F 224 JH 1112, F 262 JH 1102, F 265 JH 1100, F 273 JH 1116 and F 274 JH 1115.

13 Letter 570; see also Welsh-Ovcharov 1971 II, pp. 36-38, and Van Tilborgh 2010, pp. 150-60, for an overview of his social integration in France. Van Gogh wanted Angrand's 'fille aux poules' of 1884 (private collection), and offered '2 vues du Moulin de la galette' in exchange. For an identification of these works see p. 43, note 22.



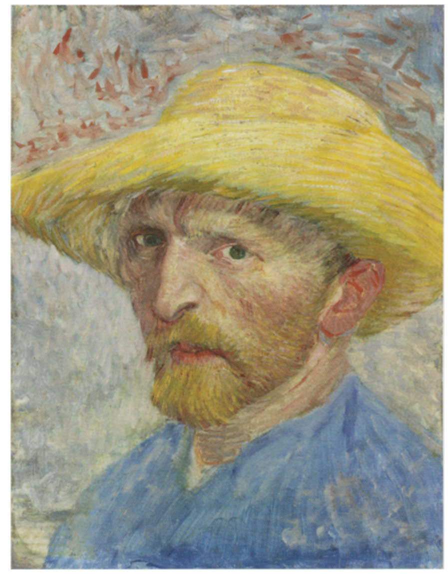


5 John Russell, *Nude study*, c. 1886. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

6 *Shoes* (F 332 JH 1234), 1886. Cambridge (Mass.), Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University.



7 Emile Bernard, *Portrait of Bernard's grandmother*, 1887. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



8 *Self-portrait* (F 526 JH 1309), 1887. Detroit, The Detroit Institute of Arts.

Bernard, who exchanged four or even more paintings with him, among them his *Portrait of Bernard's grandmother* (figs. 7, 8).[14] All but one of those pictures date from the second half of 1887, when Van Gogh was also doing business with Lucien Pissarro, Camille's son,[15] who gave him prints in return for a painting (figs. 9, 10). At the end of the year Van Gogh exchanged two still lifes of sunflowers for a landscape (figs. 11, 12), which says enough about his modest position as a foreign newcomer amidst the Parisian avant-garde.[16]

14 Toulouse-Lautrec owned Van Gogh's second version of his *View from Theo's apartment* of 1887 (F 341a JH 1243; fig. 95b). There is a painting and a pastel by him in the family collection that could have been part of an exchange: *Two prostitutes in a café* of c. 1886 (inv. s 275) and *Portrait of Vincent van Gogh in Le Tambourin* from the beginning of 1887 (inv. d 693). However, we do not know whether this took place during Van Gogh's time in Paris. Toulouse-Lautrec may only have got Van Gogh's painting after 1888-89 (see cat. 95, note 12). Van Gogh did make an exchange with Bernard in 1887: a self-portrait in return for the portrait of the latter's grandmother (figs.8, 7), as we know from letter 704. He also reported in letter 640 that he had exchanged Japanese prints for several works by his friend just before he left Paris. They probably included *Acrobats* (Montevideo, Uruguay, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes), which is dedicated to Vincent and belonged to the brothers but was evidently returned to Bernard later (letter 630; Luthi 1982, p. 14, no. 65). The following three works from the family collection could also have been part of the transaction, for they are all from Bernard's Paris period: *Figure in the grass*, *Still life with flowers* and *Ragpicker fishing* (inv. s 258, s 255, s 367). Bernard owned several of Van Gogh's paintings from before 1888, but with the exception of the self-portrait mentioned above it is not known when he acquired them (see New York 2007-08, pp. 366, 367). According to De la Faille 1970 he had *Woman with a scarlet bow in her hair* of 1885 (F 207 JH 979), *Woman strolling in a garden* (F 368 JH 1262) and *The Seine with a rowing boat* of 1887 (F 298 JH 1257), but that seems unlikely in the case of the latter two (see Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 79, 88). It emerges from the Vollard archive in the Musée d'Orsay that he also had two nude studies (F 329 JH 1215 and F 330 JH 1214), 'Les usines', which may have been F 318 JH 1288, two self-portraits, F 319 JH 1333 and F 366 JH 1345, and perhaps F 810 JH 2109 (see Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 84), all of 1887 as well. *Blue and white grapes, apples, pears and lemons* of 1887 (F 382 JH 1337) also seems to have belonged to Bernard (Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 64, 276). Furthermore, he had 'Poires et marrons', listed in the 1890 inventory of Theo's collection as a Paris work (Bonger 1890, no. 42), but it cannot be identified with any of the paintings in the oeuvre catalogues. Interestingly enough, the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco has a still life with pears and chestnuts (and an apple) which is attributed to Van Gogh on its website. Further examination is needed to see whether that is correct and whether this is the work listed as being in Theo's collection in Bonger 1890.

15 *Ragpicker fishing* (see the previous note) dates from 1886 (kind communication of Fred Leeman). The exchange with Lucien Pissarro is mentioned in letter 592 and in Lucien's letter of 26 January 1928 to Paul Gachet Jr (b 886). Lucien worked from July 1887 as a lithographer in the printing works of Theo's employer Boussod, Valadon & Cie, which probably enabled Vincent to get to know him better. On this see Bailey 1994, p. 44.

16 Those sunflower still lifes are F 375 JH 1329 (fig. 12) and F 376 JH 1331; Gauguin gave him *On the shore of the lake, Martinique* (fig. 11). See letters 640, 736. Later, when he was in Arles, Vincent also wanted to exchange works with three other artists he had met in Paris: Georges Seurat (letters 584 and 594), Camille Pissarro (letter 594) and Arnold Hendrik Koning. The latter said that he would 'rather have one painted study than the 2 drawings' ('liever een geschilderde studie in plaats van de 2 teekeningen'), as Vincent had originally proposed (quotation from b 1077 and letters 600, 614, note 3, 615 and 740).



9 Lucien Pissarro after Camille Pissarro, *The chestnut seller*, 1884. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



10 *Still life with apples* (F 378 JH 1340), 1887. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.

He also realised that exchanges with colleagues were not enough to get his name known. Gifts to friendly art dealers, no matter how modest their reputations and influence, were also important. For instance, Theo's colleague Alexander Reid (1854-1928; fig. 13), a Scottish dealer, received a still life and a portrait in 1887.[17] Tanguy also owned works by Van Gogh, but then he supplied him with artists' materials free of charge – or at least he did until his wife got wind of it.[18] In addition, not long after arriving in Arles Van Gogh considered giving the modern art museum in The Hague two of the three largest paintings from his stay in Paris: *Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette* and *Allotments in Montmartre* (cat. 115 and fig. 115a), which he hoped would make him better known in the Netherlands.[19] However, he never put the plan into action.

17 F 379 JH 1341 (see letter 592). According to Cooper 1976, p. 6, the other work was a portrait of Reid that has recently been identified as F 270 JH 1207 (Bailey 2006).

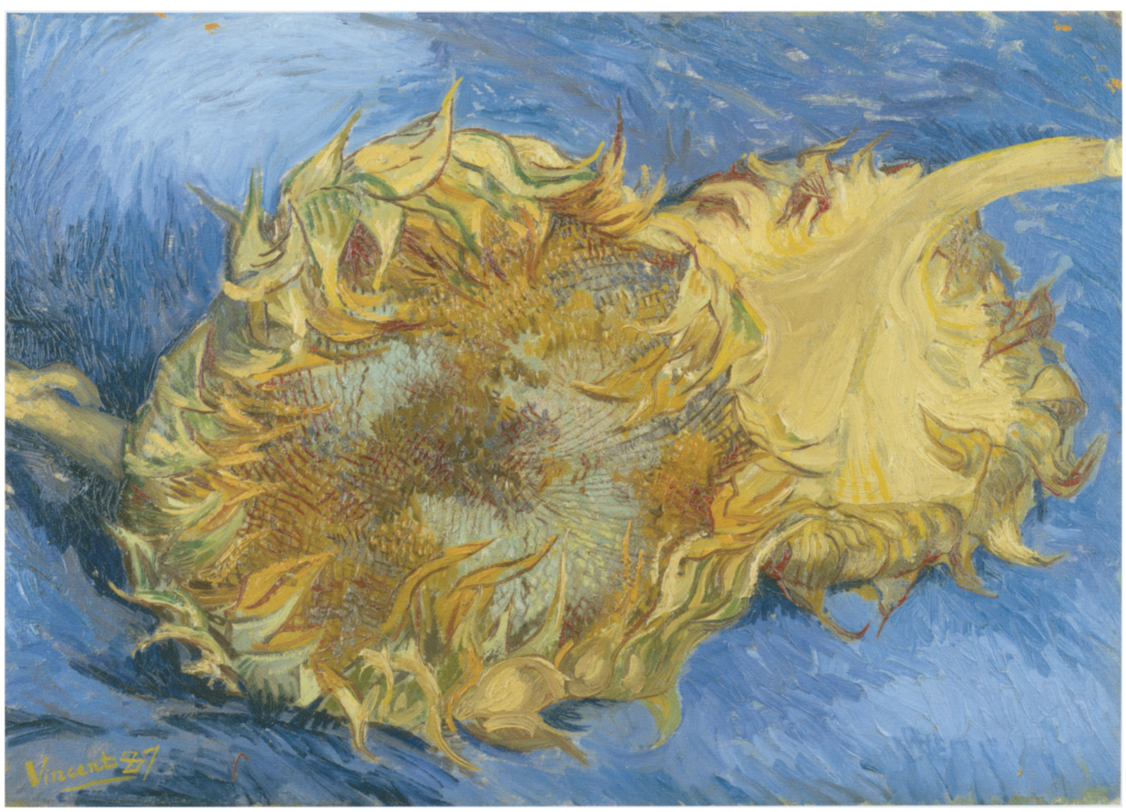
18 In 1888 Tanguy owned at least four paintings from Van Gogh's Paris period: a flower piece [640], 'the study [...] of Asnières – a bank of the Seine' [637], Vincent's portrait of him (F 363 JH 1351) and another of his wife, 'which they sold' [638]. Van Gogh also painted the portrait of a friend of Tanguy's for which he was paid 20 francs (see p. 19 above and note 7; fig. 4). His estate also contained one of the still lifes of shoes from 1887, F 333 JH 1236, but Tanguy may have acquired it after Vincent left Paris (for the provenance see De la Faille 1970, p. 624). It is clear from letters 637, 638, and Hartrick 1939, p. 47, that Van Gogh gave Tanguy at least one painting in exchange for free paints. See letter 571 for the part played by Tanguy's wife.

19 Letter 592. Van Gogh also wanted to surprise Anton Mauve's widow with a painting of a peach tree (F 394 JH 1379), George Hendrik Breitner with a still life of oranges (F 395 JH 1363) and H.G. Tersteeg, the Dutch manager of the Hague branch of Boussod, Valadon & Cie, with *The Langlois bridge with washerwomen* (F 397 JH 1368). In the end, though, only Mauve's widow received the painting earmarked for her. Nothing came of the other plans.

11 Paul Gauguin, *On the shore of the lake, Martinique*, 1887. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

12 *Sunflowers gone to seed* (F 375 JH 1329), 1887. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.







13 *Portrait of Alexander Reid* (F 343 JH 1250), 1887. Glasgow, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum.

Works were also given away without any obvious strategic intentions. In the spring of 1887 Van Gogh's mysterious acquaintance Comtesse de la Boissière (c. 1857-?) in Asnières received two paintings purely as a gesture of friendship.[20] He gave the largest number of works, more than 20 still lifes painted during his first year in Paris, to his lover Agostina Segatori (1841-1910; fig. 14), a former artists' model and the manageress of Le Tambourin restaurant.[21] He did so in the summer of 1887, not long after the breakdown of their relationship and possibly in the hope of winning her back.[22]

Van Gogh probably also used paintings as a means of payment as well, although only one such case is documented. While living in Paris he exchanged one of his

20 Letter 611. For the countess see Martigny 2000, pp. 143, 144. Van Gogh wanted to give her two more works the following year, with Theo as the intermediary (letter 611), but it is not known whether he actually did so. A note dated 9 November 1929 in the archives of the Thannhauser art gallery published in Holtmann *et al.* 2006, p. 48, records that the Charpentier gallery was offering five small paintings by Van Gogh that came from 'an Asnières family with whom Van Gogh had lived and to whom he had given them' ('[...] einer Familie aus Asnières, bei der Van Gogh wohnte und die er dieser schenkte'). One suspects that this was the Levaillant de la Boissière family, and going by the provenance in De la Faille's oeuvre catalogue of 1970 they could have been two works from Nuenen (F 126a JH 655 and F 146a JH 565), two from Paris (F 239 JH 1267 and F 365v JH 1354 [which is painted on the back of another work from Nuenen, F 365r JH 654]), and one from the very start of the Arles period (F 290 JH 1360); see further letter 611, notes 3, 4. It is also possible that while he was in Paris Van Gogh gave a picture to Louis Rivet (1851-1931/32?), his and Theo's doctor, as suggested by letter 735 from the beginning of 1889, when he wrote that he wanted 'to give another painting to Rivet'. See also letter 736.

21 On this see cats. 84 and 102.

22 At the beginning of 1888 Van Gogh looked back on this act of impetuous generosity with some regret (letter 640).

14 *In the café: Agostina Segatori in Le Tambourin*, cat. 84.



'two or three' still lifes with smoked herrings for a carpet [752] (fig. 15), and several studies in oils may have come into the possession of Gabriël Delarebeyrette, the son of the art dealer Joseph Delarebeyrette, who specialised in the work of Monticelli and had died in 1886, in return for around 100 Japanese prints.[23]

The collection after 1890

When Vincent died in July 1890 the collection held by his brother Theo contained at least 130 paintings from the Paris period, from which it can be concluded that more works were sold, exchanged or given away than are recorded in the surviving documents.[24] After Theo's death in January 1891, his entire collection passed to his widow, Jo van Gogh-Bonger (1862-1925), and the Paris section then became even smaller, although the reduction cannot be charted exactly.[25] She sold roughly a third

23 V.W. van Gogh to Paul Gachet Jr, 2 March 1926 (b 2812). Theo's son had asked Andries Bonger about the provenance of the Japanese prints and reported that 'Vincent had exchanged 100 or so prints for some paintings of his with a dealer (of paintings? or of books?) in Paris called De la Deybaret or some such name' ('Vincent a échangé une centaine d'estampes contre quelques tableaux de lui chez un marchand [de tableaux? ou de livres?] nommé de la Deybaret ou un nom semblable à Paris').

24 This number is based on the inventory of Theo's collection made at the end of 1890 listing at least 97 paintings from the Paris period (Bonger 1890, nos. 16^{4}, 17-92^{quarto}, 301, 303, 304-06, 310 and 311), the current state of knowledge about subsequent sales (see notes 26 and 29 below), and the present size of the collection.

25 For example, it is known that *Piles of French novels and roses in a glass ('Romans parisiens')* (F 359 JH 1332) was in the family collection in 1890 (Bonger 1890, no. 69), but its sale is not documented. In 1888 Theo certainly sold a Paris self-portrait which has never been identified (see Bailey 1996). It is also clear that there was some interest in Vincent's Paris work in 1888 from a letter written by the critic Gustave Geffroy, who had visited Tanguy's shop accompanied by the bibliophile Paul Gallimard (letter from Gustave Geffroy to Theo van Gogh, 29 May 1888, b 1199). Gallimard, who was to buy *Irises in a vase* in 1891 (F 680 JH 1978), and whom Camille Pissarro described as 'one of [Theo] Van Gogh's pleasant customers' ('un des sympathiques clients de Van Gogh'), was interested in buying two of Vincent's Paris canvases (Stolwijk/Veenenbos 2002, p. 25, note 33, and Bailly-Herzberg 1980-91, vol. 3, p. 56), but probably bought nothing in the end.



15 *Smoked herrings* (F 203 JH 1123), 1886. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.

of the Paris pictures that were in the collection in 1890. To mention just a few of the most important ones, they included the canvases making up his three triptychs from Asnières, which cannot be reconstructed precisely (see cat. 106), two of his most Pointillist paintings: *Labourer on a countryroad* (fig. 103a) and *Interior of a restaurant*, his study for the portrait of Julien Tanguy (fig. 128e), and three of his five largest pictures from the period: the masterly *Sunflowers gone to seed* (fig. 124c), the second version of *Piles of French novels and roses in a glass ('Romans parisiens')* (fig. 134c) and the *Allotments in Montmartre* mentioned above (fig. 115a).[26]

Not everything was up for sale. There were five works which she refused to let go at any price: *Wheatfield with partridge* (cat. 110), *Quinces, lemons, pears and grapes* (cat. 128) and three self-portraits of 1887 (cats. 98, 125, 137).[27] *Wheatfield with partridge*, which had pride of place in the drawing room of her Amsterdam apartment,

26 *Interior of a restaurant* is F 342 JH 1256. These sales are recorded in Jo's account book: Stolwijk/Veenenbos 2002, pp. 167-70, 178, 180. She sold 9 non-identified paintings (see ibid. no. 12/7), as well as F 251 JH 1142, F 272 JH 1183, F 302 JH 1322, F 303 JH 1323, F 311 JH 1325, F 313 JH 1251, F 315 JH 1320, F 342 JH 1256, F 345 JH 1249, F 350 JH 1245, F 357 JH 1216, F 360 JH 1349, F 361 JH 1260, F 364 JH 1352, F 380 JH 1225, F 549 JH 1572 and F 602 JH 1343. Works were usually sold either during or just after exhibitions at which Jo put just under half the Paris paintings in her possession up for show.

27 This is evident from the annotation 'niet te koop' ('not for sale') at exhibitions; see the relevant entries.



16 Photograph of Vincent Willem van Gogh and Josine Wibaut in the drawing room of Jo van Gogh-Bonger's apartment at Koninginneweg 77, Amsterdam. Circa 1915. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

was probably a personal favourite (fig. 16).[28] The still life with quinces has a unique dedication from Vincent to Theo, so she naturally wanted to keep it as a symbol of the deep, lifelong attachment between the brothers. Her desire to keep the best self-portraits in the collection was also very logical, and seen from today's perspective it is strange that she did offer the *Self-portrait with grey felt hat* from the autumn of 1887 for sale (cat. 130), but she probably did not consider that remarkable, highly stylised painting realistic enough. She failed to sell it, though.

When Jo died in 1925 the active policy of selling works from the collection had come to a virtual halt. Vincent Willem van Gogh (1890-1978), the only child of Jo and Theo, did let some go, but only a few. Around 1926 he sold four from the Paris period, possibly in order to honour commitments made by his mother, the two most important being *Garden in Montmartre*, now in the Yale University Art Gallery in New Haven, and *The Italian woman* in the Musée d'Orsay in Paris.[29] The *Portrait of Alexander Reid* (fig. 13) also left the collection three years later, when it was sold for 'a nominal sum' to the sitter's son.[30] That was the last time that Vincent Willem was tempted to sell anything from the Paris period. He did, however, make a very friendly gesture after 1945 to Jonkheer D.C. Röell (1894-1961), rewarding him with the gift of *Arbour on an allotment* of 1887 for shepherding the family collection safely through the Second World War.[31]

There are only three paintings with a provenance different from the collection that Jo passed on to her son: *Small bottle with peonies and blue delphiniums* (cat. 68), *Trees and undergrowth* (cat. 112) and *Sunset in Montmartre* (cat. 91). The first two originally belonged to Henri Bonger (1859-1929), Jo's eldest brother, but were added to the family collection in 1944 when Vincent Willem inherited them from his aunt, Betsy Hortense Bonger (1870-1944). The third picture, a small but charming landscape of the hill of Montmartre at sunset, came from another of Jo's brothers, Andries Bonger (1861-1936). It was acquired from his widow three years before the Van Gogh Museum opened its doors. There has been no change in the number of works in the collection from Van Gogh's Antwerp and Paris periods since then, provided, that is, one overlooks the discussions about the authenticity of some of them (see cats. 53, 54, 76, 83; Appendix 1).

28 It is known from photographs of her Amsterdam home taken around 1905 and 1914 that besides *Wheatfield with partridge* the following Paris works hung or stood there: cats. 55, 64, 71, 80, 88, 105 and Appendix 1, no. 1. It emerges from document b 5536 that cats. 96 and 128 were also among the chosen works. As far as can be made out she always hung the same pictures and rarely varied them, except perhaps during exhibitions.
29 F 276 JH 1259 and F 381 JH 1355. Others that were sold were *A suburb of Paris* (F 264 JH 1179), *Rispal Restaurant in Asnières* (F 355 JH 1266) and 'Small mill on Montmartre' ('Molentje op Montmartre'), probably F 348 JH 1182 (for which see documents b 4103, b 4104, b 4125, b 5818 and b 6948). Vincent Willem van Gogh is also mentioned in the provenance of two other paintings from the Paris period in De la Faille's oeuvre catalogue of 1970: *Vase with gladioli* (F 247 JH 1149) and *Portrait of Alexander Reid* (F 270 JH 1207), but it is doubtful that either one belonged to his collection (for the latter work see Bailey 2006).
30 The quotation is from a letter from A.J. McNeill Reid to Vincent Willem van Gogh, 23 July 1929 (b 4123).
31 F 264a JH 1306. On this see Vincent Willem van Gogh's note in his memorandum of 12 March 1971.

Treatment history of the collection

Ella Hendriks

Technical study has brought to light how the particular materials and techniques employed by Van Gogh have sometimes led to significant changes in the way his paintings look today. Equally, though, later interventions by restorers have left their mark and are an important factor that has to be taken into consideration. In this case we are fortunate that the almost singular provenance of the Van Gogh Collection, handed down through the family, means that the history of its treatment is relatively well known, from the first decades of the 20th century onwards at least. A combination of physical examinations and documentary research has helped to reconstruct the probable treatment history for each painting. Moreover, putting this information together has created a picture of changing attitudes towards the treatment of the collection on the part of successive generations charged with its care.

Early period and Jo van Gogh-Bonger

There is only very limited evidence for pictures treated early on, in the first few decades after they were made. They included a handful of Paris paintings that were reported to have already required 'relining' by J.C. Traas (see pp. 29-33 below), all of which were invoiced for treatment in 1932 (cats. 96, 107, 127, and a Montmartre landscape, possibly cat. 93).[1] Presumably the old linings that were removed during these treatments would have been carried out with aqueous glue or a glue-paste adhesive in the traditional French way, as opposed to the customary wax-resin method practised in Holland.[2] Available evidence supports this theory, since a defective glue lining was specified as the reason for advocating wax-resin relining of the Montmartre landscape,[3] and exceptionally, an old glue-based lining still seems to be present on *In the café: Agostina Segatori in Le Tambourin* (cat. 84).[4]

Generally though, conservative principles seem to have ruled when the pictures were still in the custody of Theo van Gogh (1857-91) and afterwards Jo van Gogh-Bonger (1862-1925). Jo's usual policy was to leave them well alone, despite the gentle urging of family friend Willem Steenhoff (1863-1932), head of the Paintings Department at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, to have some paintings carefully cleaned, quite 'aside from the issue of varnishing (a very thin layer)' to which he knew that she was vehemently opposed.[5] Most of the measures taken in this period seem to have been of a basic kind to facilitate handling and display. Loose canvases without tacking margins, the majority of them painted on both sides, were

1 They were *Portrait of Léonie Rose Charbuy-Davy* (cat. 96) in b 4210, December 1932, *By the Seine* (cat. 107) in b 4210, *Grapes* (cat. 127) in b 4205, December 1932, and 'Montmartre' (possibly cat. 93) in b 4202, June 1932, presumably the same view of Montmartre that had been recommended for relining in 1926, see b 5618 in note 3. Though the collection contains several other Montmartre landscapes, only cat. 93 shows all the features that are consistent with Traas's highly standardised method of wax-resin lining developed by 1932.

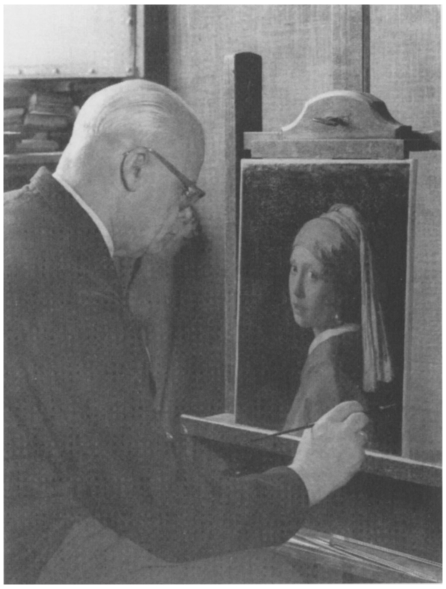
2 See Te Marvelde 2001, pp. 143-49, on the establishment of the wax-resin lining method in Holland.

3 See b 5618, undated: 'The Paris view of Montmartre is pasted onto another canvas (probably with glue), but in such a way that the original is buckling at various points, so the later canvas must be removed and then properly relined (with wax)' (''t Parijsche gezicht op Montmartre is geplakt (met lijm waarschijnlijk) op een ander doek. Maar zoo dat het origineele op verschillende plaatsen op bobbelt – dat latere doek moet er dus af en dan opnieuw en goed verdoekt (met was)').

4 A glue/paste lining was noted during examination and treatment of the painting by the Stichting Kollektief Restauratie Atelier (SKRA) in Amsterdam in 1987. This is hidden at the back by an old, loose lining canvas that is painted red. The painting is probably to be identified with *'Woman at a table'*, mentioned as being cleaned and varnished (but not lined or relined) by Traas in b 4214, August 1927, supporting the impression that the existing lining is from an earlier date.

5 b 5605, 1917 ('De verniskwestie (een zeer dun laagje) staat hier buiten'). See also Paintings 1, pp. 26, 27, regarding the early conservation history of the collection.

mounted onto sturdy cardboard backings that have since been removed (including cats. 118-20, 129),[6] and studies on thin *carton* supports were fitted with frames and protective backboards by the Amsterdam firm of M. van Menk (cats. 55-63, 68, 69, 85).[7]



1 The restorer J.C. Traas (1898-1984) at work in 1960, as reproduced from Wadum 1994.

The J.C. Traas campaign (1926-33)

This situation changed in the year after Jo van Gogh-Bonger's death, however, when her son Vincent Willem van Gogh loaned several paintings to the Mesdag Museum in The Hague, where Steenhoff had now been appointed director.[8] Steenhoff, an amateur painter who undertook occasional varnishing of the Mesdag pictures, carefully inspected each one, recommending appropriate treatments that were carried out before the works were put on display.[9] The outcome was so encouraging that he managed to persuade Vincent Willem van Gogh to follow this through with a campaign for the entire collection. The earliest documented consignment of works to be treated consisted of seven paintings (including four Paris works) that were handed over on 11 October 1926 and were 'as good as ready' by 2 December of that year.[10] Treatment of 19 paintings in the period December 1926 to January 1927 followed, and this rapid momentum was generally kept up until the end of the restoration campaign, the last Paris work being invoiced for treatment in July 1933.[11]

Steenhoff's communications to Vincent Willem van Gogh in the period 1926-27 reveal his attitudes towards restoration, carefully weighing up treatment options in each case. He adopted a differentiated approach to the question of lining or relining, generally preferring to carefully patch small holes from the back instead.[12] Yet in the case of a painting 'with pears' (cat. 128), he recommended lining even though it was not immediately necessary, 'since the canvas had begun to look a bit like a sieve when held against the light'.[13] Steenhoff's view of retouching emerges as conservative, suggesting a limited 'tipping in' ('bij punten') of damaged areas with watercolour that could easily be removed and, as he stressed, would not damage the original paint.[14] On the other hand, freed from Jo's constraints he now recommended varnishing French-period pictures like *Apples* (cat. 126), where he considered that the lack of varnish had contributed to problems of flaking paint.[15] Most radical of all however, he proposed scraping off Van Gogh's damaged *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 74) to recover an underlying picture that should prove more valuable, suggesting to Vincent Willem van Gogh that he might need time to accustom himself to this shocking proposition, which he hoped to discuss further with him.[16] Though Vincent Willem van Gogh trusted Steenhoff's judgement on the whole, in this case, fortunately, his recommendation was not carried out.

To perform the required treatments, Steenhoff took under his wing the gallery attendant at the Mesdag Museum, J.C. Traas (1898-1984) (fig. 1).[17] From 1925

6 On the later removal of the cardboard backings see b 4208, January 1930, b 4217, June 1932, and b 4202, June 1932. See also Paintings 1, p. 26.

7 A trade label from the company Menk, 'Vergulderij, spiegel + lijsten en passe-partout-fabriek', survives on the card backboard applied to cat. 68, which in turn matches the backings applied to other works, apparently by the same firm. Invoices dated between 1909 and 1913 record work undertaken by Menk for Jo van Gogh-Bonger: see b 4603-16, and Stolwijk/Veenenbos 2002, pp. 127 (nos. 92/30 and 92/13), 128 (nos. 93/4 and 93/16), and 163 (no. 93/3).

8 Heijbroek 1991, pp. 213-15. Memorandum 'De restaurateur Traas', Dr V.W. van Gogh, 13 November 1974. Steenhoff was director of the Mesdag Museum from 1924 to 1928.

9 Steenhoff is recorded as having varnished nine pictures in the period 1924-25, according to anonymous annotations in a catalogue of the Mesdag Collection transcribed by René Boitelle, conservation archives, Van Gogh Museum.

10 b 5625, no date, b 5618, no date, and b 5626, 2 December 1926, ('zoo goed als klaar').

11 b 4203, 12, July 1933.

12 b 5619, 2 March 1926, and on 'the Van Gogh with the little mill' ('De eene Van Gogh met het molentje') see b 5617, Tuesday evening (no date).

13 b 5626, 2 December 1926, ('omdat het tegen 't licht in gezien er al een beetje als een "zeef" begint uit te zien).

14 b 5617, Tuesday evening (no date).

15 b 5618, no date.

16 b 5630, 3 June 1927, and b 5631, 22 August 1927.

17 Traas started working at the Mesdag Museum in 1920, and became a member of the permanent staff in 1922. He continued as caretaker of the museum until 1940 alongside his position as a restorer.

Steenhoff instructed Traas to carry out simple treatments under his direct supervision in the museum studio. Furthermore, he arranged a five-month internship for Traas from September 1927 to January 1928 at the Vienna studio of the Imperial and Royal Paintings Collection, and persuaded the Ministry of Education, Arts and Science to grant him the necessary leave of absence.[18] As a civil servant, Traas would be able to carry out restorations free of charge for government collections, and the ministry was keen to take advantage of this. Almost immediately after his return they wrote granting permission for Traas to work as a restorer, requesting Prof. W. Martin, director of the Mauritshuis, to give him a chance. Martin was reluctant to do so, replying that he preferred not to entrust the treatment in question to someone who, 'reading between the lines' of the certification for his Vienna internship, 'had gained merely technical experience'.[19] Indeed the recorded work carried out there under the supervision of the restorer Karl Proksch, though to everyone's complete satisfaction, was quite limited in scope.[20] Right up until 1932, despite the ministry's stated preference to use Traas whenever possible, Martin continued to favour the established restorer Derix de Wild (1869-1932) for more complex treatments.[21] Eventually, though, Martin became convinced of Traas's competence, and appointed him restorer at the Mauritshuis in 1933. In the meantime Traas had treated the entire Van Gogh collection, since 1931 in his official capacity as restorer at the Mesdag Museum.

Examination of the physical characteristics of the treatments carried out by Traas in his formative years as a restorer, reveals how his skills and attitudes developed over time. In the winter of 1926-27, for example, three works painted on loose pieces of canvas (without tacking margins) were subjected to rigorous and essentially irreversible marouflage treatments (cats. 99, 100 and 124), yet later, in the period 1929-31/32, he performed similar treatments for eleven Paris pictures on *carton* in a much more sympathetic way (cats. 55-63, 69 and 85).[22] Furthermore, the later treatments demonstrate a historical awareness, for Traas retained the earlier protective backboards applied on Jo's instructions, as well as attempting to transfer labels that reveal where the original *carton* supports were purchased by Van Gogh, sticking both back onto the reverse of the treated pictures.[23] Another change was in Traas's attitude towards lining paintings. At first he refrained from lining a number of Paris canvases,[24] but subsequently it seems to have become a universal measure for virtually every painting that passed through his hands. This is well illustrated by three Paris pictures on matching ready-primed twill canvases, all in a similar condition. Whereas the first was left unlined when Traas treated it in 1927, the other two were wax-resin lined as a standard measure in 1933 (cats. 135 and 136, 137 respectively).[25]

18 A letter of certification dated 12 January 1928 mentions the starting date for the internship as 1 September 1927. Correspondence with Steenhoff concerning the internship is preserved in the archives of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. I am most grateful to Elke Oberthaler, Head of Conservation at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, for unearthing and sharing this information with me.
19 Copies of letters from the Ministry of Education, Arts and Science to Martin dated 27 February and 17 March 1928 preserved in the Mauritshuis Archives, The Hague ('tusschen de regels door leest' and 'slechts technische ervaring heeft'). With thanks to our colleagues at the conservation department of the Mauritshuis for granting access to this material.
20 Records preserved in the archives of the Kunsthistorisches Museum reveal that he carried out remedial tasks, such as the consolidation of blisters on panel paintings, which Martin would have considered a mere 'technical' intervention, as opposed to potentially complex cleaning treatments, for example.
21 Letter of 11 November 1928 from the ministry to Martin, expressing this preference for Traas. Martin gave his reasons for not entrusting certain treatments to Traas in letters to the ministry dated 17 March 1928, 8 November 1928, 11 November 1928, 30 April 1931, 9 June 1932, and 10 August 1932. Copies of documents are preserved in the Mauritshuis archives, The Hague. See Te Marvelde 2001 for the famous De Wild family of restorers. Derix de Wild was assisted by his son Agenitus Martinus de Wild (1899-1969) in their studio in Laan van Meerdervoort, on the same street as the Mesdag Museum. There are records of D. de Wild having treated pictures in that collection in 1919 and 1921: see the catalogue mentioned in note 9.
22 For cats. 99, 100 and 124, see invoice b 4206, December 1926-January 1927, listing '*[Dood?]skoppen* [2]' and '*Zonnebloemen v Gogh*'. All three canvases were bonded to plywood boards using a lead white adhesive, employing excessive heat and pressure during the ironing process. A gentler approach using an aqueous adhesive was followed for eight works invoiced in January 1930 (b 4208), as well as cat. 56 listed in the 1930-March 1931 invoice (b 4207) and cat. 55 in the invoice of December 1931-January 1932 (b 4200).
23 Exceptionally, the Pignel-Dupont label remains on the reverse of the original support of cat. 68. In the case of cats. 56-59, and 61-63, though, the stickers were transferred from the original *cartons* to the backing supports applied by Traas, which accounts for the lumpier glue used to re-adhere them, as well as for slight damage that must have occurred in the process. No labels are evident on cats. 55, 60, and 69, but it is possible that they are hidden by the marouflage backings, or were irrevocably damaged during transfer.
24 For example, several of the Paris paintings that were invoiced for treatment in 1928 were left unlined. They have been identified as follows: *Basket of crocus bulbs* (cat. 79), *Bank of the Seine* (cat. 106), *The bridge at Courbevoie* (cat. 108), *Vase with gladioli and Chinese asters* (cat. 70), all mentioned in b 4211, May-August 1928, and *Dish with citrus fruit* (cat. 88) mentioned in b 4215, September 1928. Of these paintings, cats. 79 and 88 are still unlined today, while cats. 106 and 108 have been lined, and cat. 70 strip-lined at a more recent date.
25 Invoices b 4214, August 1927, concerning cat. 135, and b 420[3], July 1933, concerning cats. 136, 137.

This routine approach to wax-resin lining was entirely in keeping with the tendencies of the day – an attitude that was commonplace well into the 20th century, when the method was still considered to offer a general panacea for all defects present in the various layers of a painting, and a necessary prophylactic measure for paintings by Van Gogh in particular. Indeed, it was not until the late 1960s that restorers began to question the widespread and largely indiscriminate practice of wax-resin lining. As late as 1968, Helmut Ruhemann, a leading restorer at the National Gallery in London, expressed an opinion that is worth quoting in full, since it almost certainly reflects earlier thinking. 'In my opinion nearly all Van Gogh's pictures belong to a type that should, even if an immediate necessity is not apparent, be relined, for two reasons; first, often the all-too absorbent canvas (frequently without sufficient ground on it) on which Van Gogh painted has drained too much of the oil out of the paint and left it in places almost as dry and powdery as pastel colours; here the wax impregnation will bind and hold the loose particles. Secondly, on the majority of Van Goghs the paint is badly cracked and flaking, probably also due to the cause just mentioned and to the excessive impasto (thick paint). This flaking can be permanently remedied by the permeation with wax-resin adhesive, which takes place during the lining.'[26]



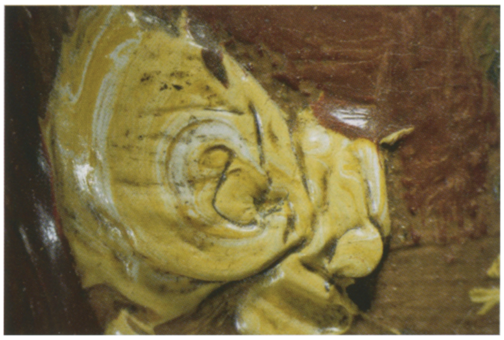
2 Enlarged detail of *Portrait of an old woman* (cat. 46), showing remnants of Traas's machine stitching through the left tacking edge.

It is striking that the wax-resin linings carried out by Traas came to show very consistent physical characteristics, pointing to a formulaic procedure. In fact, those telltale features are so uniform that they may be considered to be a hallmark of his practice in the period. A peculiar feature is the inevitable presence of an even row of tiny stitches through the tacking edges in linen-coloured thread (fig. 2).[27] A sewing machine was evidently run around each painting, attaching margins of fabric to extend the original canvas so that it could be tensioned on a loom during lining in accordance with the so-called Dutch method. In this process, both the original and lining canvases were stretched on looms, brought into contact, and bonded by impregnation of wax-resin spread with a hot iron. It is not documented who instructed Traas in this method, but he could not have learned it in Vienna, where only glue-paste linings were carried out at the time.[28] Indeed, shortly after his return from his internship there, Traas declared that he was still searching for a means of lining paintings that was suited to the Dutch climate (i.e. not using an aqueous adhesive).[29] A likely mentor was Derix de Wild at the Mauritshuis, though the specific detail of machine stitching through the tacking margins is not a known feature of the De Wild family's lining technique, and may have been Traas's own invention.[30]

In the hands of an unskilled restorer, the wax-resin lining method carried inherent risks due to the elevated temperature and pressure applied, especially for the high impasto surfaces of Van Gogh paintings, where there was a tendency for certain colours to be softened by relatively low heat.[31] In view of the vulnerable

26 Ruhemann 1968, p. 153. Ruhemann was an English restorer of German birth. From 1929 to 1933 he worked at the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum in Berlin as chief restorer of the Berlin State Galleries, then emigrated to England and from 1934 worked at the National Gallery in London. See Ruhemann 1968, pp. 31-58. It is in Berlin that he is likely to have encountered the Dutch lining method, since it is known that in previous decades instruction in that method travelled back and forth between restorers in Berlin and The Hague. See Te Marvelde 2001, pp. 143-45.
27 Unusually, cat. 46 has a double row of machine stitching, with tiny remnants of the linen margins still attached. Other characteristic features of Traas's linings in this period are the French-style replacement stretchers (made of stained pinewood, with an outer mitred lip to prevent distortion when keying out), clipping the corners of the original canvas to provide a neat butt join around the stretcher, and the particular brown paper tape applied over the edges of the canvas after lining.
28 I am grateful to Elke Oberthaler, Head of Conservation at the Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum, and to Manfried Koller, Head of the Restaurierwerkstätte Kunstdenkmale in Vienna, for confirming this point.
29 Letter from Martin to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Science, 12 March 1928, Mauritshuis archives, The Hague.
30 With thanks to Mireille te Marvelde for confirming that she has not come across this feature in her study of De Wild linings. The machine stitching may be seen as a modern variant of sewing on strips of canvas by hand, as was done, for example, with Cornelis Cornelisz van Haarlem's *Massacre of the Innocents*, which was lined in 1890 by Willem Antonij Hopman (1828-1910) using the Dutch method (restoration archives, Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem).
31 Ruhemann 1968, p. 154, believed that the ready softening of Van Gogh's paint was due to the inclusion of wax, or some other ingredient that melted easily. Wax was a known additive to 19th-century tube paints, although so far analysis of samples from actual French paintings of the period has disclosed very few examples of its use. However, there is one instance where wax was mixed into a vermilion paint used by Van Gogh. See Leighton *et al.* 1987, p. 59.





3 Photograph during face-down wax-resin relining of a Van Gogh painting, reproduced from *Manual on the conservation of paintings*, Paris (International Museums Office) 1940.

4 *Vase with gladioli and Chinese asters* (cat. 70), detail of flattened impasto in a gladiolus with the imprint of a canvas weave.

impasto, Traas almost certainly ironed the paintings face down (on a cushioning surface), as was also recommended to achieve an adequate and even wax saturation (fig. 3).[32] Given that he would not have been able to observe and monitor changes in surface texture, one could say that there is surprisingly little evidence for obvious damage caused by lining in the pictures examined. Though it was not always possible to categorically state the origin of impairments, most flattened impasto and other blemishes in the paint appear to result from Van Gogh's habit of leaning pictures against each other, or stacking loose canvases taken off their stretchers before the paint was properly dry (fig. 4).[33] Another commendable feature of these early linings by Traas is that, in general, the canvases remain quite supple, due to the fact that the wax-resin mixture was ironed out to a fairly uniform, thin layer.[34]

An undesirable consequence of the wax-resin method of lining, however, is that the molten adhesive seeps into permeable layers of the painting structure, causing them to darken.[35] Though Van Gogh considered that his quickly painted studies would inevitably need lining, due to the poor adhesion of thick paint strokes on the thin canvases, one should realise that he would have been thinking of the traditional French method of glue or glue-paste lining, rather than wax-resin infusion

32 In addition, the fact that the paint surface was faced with paper attached with starch glue-paste in order to protect it during lining would have made it impossible to see. Examinations often revealed remnants of these facing materials left behind on the paintings.
33 Technical evidence for such practices included canvas weave imprints in slower-drying passages of paint (cats. 47 and 71, for example), actual fibres embedded in the paint surface, as well as transferred islands of paint and ground (cat. 46, for example). Occasionally, damage was thought to have resulted from contact with board, or artist's board with an imitation canvas texture (cats. 101, 129), rather than fabric. In this context it is interesting to note Vincent's later advice to Theo to store the less important works he sent by laying them flat between two sheets of cardboard [782]. See Van de Wetering 1996, pp. 194-96, on the discrepancy between the modern conservators' concern to retain a pristine surface and Van Gogh's own attitude towards flattened texture in his paintings.
34 So far there is no documentary or analytical evidence that Traas added copaiba balsam to his lining adhesive mixture in order to improve flexibility, as was reported to be the case for some practitioners of the 'Dutch method' of lining. See Van der Werf *et al.* 2000, p. 2, and Te Marvelde 2001, p. 147. In a bill dated 26 January 1931 (Mauritshuis archives), Traas specified the ingredients he had purchased for lining as beeswax, Venetian turpentine and colophony. Samples of wax-resin adhesive taken from the reverse of 11 of Van Gogh's paintings from the Antwerp and Paris periods lined by Traas were analysed using DTMS at 16eV electron ionization (cats. 46, 47, 65, 67, 72, 80, 103, 109, 126, 131 and 136). The general composition of samples agreed with the ingredients named by Traas, containing a mixture of beeswax and aged diterpenoid resins. The analytical method is not suited to the detection of copaiba balsam, however, especially when present in minor quantities: see Van der Werf *et al.* 2000. Stephan and Ana Schaefer performed the sampling, together with the present author, in June 2004. The DTMS analysis was performed by Jerre van der Horst and the results were analysed and summarised in a report dated June 2005 by Jaap J. Boon of AMOLF (FOM Institute for Atomic and Molecular Physics) in Amsterdam.
35 Occasional binding medium analysis of samples provided evidence for the fact that the wax-resin lining adhesive had permeated the grounds. Two examples are *Flowerpot with garlic chives* (cat. 80), an *à l'essence* picture on canvas with a thin lead white-based ground, and *Flowering plum orchard: after Hiroshige* (cat. 131) which is on very fine canvas with a chalk ground. Sample analysis was performed using the techniques outlined in note 34. The visual consequences of wax penetration remain to be evaluated in a systematic way, however, discounting the possible contribution of the original priming materials used and their subsequent darkening upon ageing, for example. See *Sunflowers gone to seed* (cat. 124) regarding the beige (as opposed to white) colour of the barium sulphate ground, shaped by both the particular grade of pigment and the specific binding medium used, and *Bridge in the rain: after Hiroshige* (cat. 132) regarding blackening of the grey chalk ground caused by saturation with oil medium.

and the associated colour changes that this brings about.[36] Another cause of darkening in the pictures examined was Traas's standard practice of varnishing them after they had been lined, often, it seems, for the first time.[37] Like most of his contemporaries, he made no distinction between Old Master paintings that were traditionally varnished, and modern Post-Impressionist ones for which a matt and unvarnished surface would be more appropriate. The natural resin varnishes used by Traas were often thick and glossily applied, and moreover have shown a strong tendency to yellow over time, especially where pooled around impasto brushwork.[38] Furthermore there is some evidence for the fact that he might deliberately tint varnish with traces of fine black or warm-coloured pigments according to taste, a practice reminiscent of the so-called 'gallery tone' that he is known to have later applied to Old Master pictures to provide an appropriately aged look.[39]

Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

Starting in the 1930s the Van Gogh collection was on partial loan to the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, and although a professional restoration studio was established there in 1957 under the director Willem Sandberg it seems that the museum continued to draw upon Traas's expert knowledge of the Van Gogh collection virtually up until his official retirement in 1963, transporting pictures to and from his studio in Leidschendam for treatment.[40] Eleven pictures are documented as having received full treatments by the Stedelijk Museum restorers, Chris van Voorst and Co van Beek.[41] This includes four Paris works: cat. 114, which was strip-lined in 1958, and cats. 91, 108 and 112, which were all lined in the period 1969-71 in view of damage to the canvas supports. In 1970, presumably in the light of forthcoming plans to transfer the collection to the new Van Gogh Museum under construction next door, a broader condition check was performed, listing defects in the paintings with recommended treatments.[42] This included the advice to line several more as yet unlined pictures (cats. 49, 52, 72, 75, 77, 79, 88), as well as to reline the *Impasse des Deux Frères* (cat. 92). Only a few of these recommendations seem to have ever been implemented at a later date, however (cats. 72, 75 and 108), due partly to changing attitudes towards the necessity of lining.

In the early 1970s there was growing concern among restorers about what had become a widespread and largely indiscriminate practice of wax-resin lining. Several studies had been carried out on the deleterious consequences of wax-resin lining, and alternative methods and materials were being researched and developed.[43] The restorers at the Stedelijk Museum were able to exploit some of these modern

36 Letter 800. This statement is made with regard to his intention to line his study of *The bedroom*, as mentioned in letters 776 and 782.

37 Technical examinations have revealed that Traas always varnished the paintings after they had been lined, restretched and their edges taped. Consequently, removing tiny sections of the tape often confirmed that Traas's varnish was the first one applied, since there were no remnants of an older varnish underneath. Though the term 'cleaning' ('schoonmaken') is frequently mentioned in invoices for his work, this usually seems to have involved the removal of superficial dirt and residual materials from the surface of the paintings after they were lined, rather than a varnish already present. This is spelled out in invoice b 4204 (September 1932) for cat. 134: 'for the lining, superficial cleaning, retouching and varnishing of the Books' ('Wegens het verdoeken, oppervlakkig schoonmaken, retoucheeren en vernissen van de Boeken').

38 Based on physical appearance and solubility characteristics, the varnishes Traas applied in this period to the Van Gogh paintings are thought to be natural resin, apparently dammar, although analysis has revealed his use of colophony resin, with the addition of a little oil, for a varnish applied to Vermeer's *View of Delft* in 1956 (The Hague, Mauritshuis). Both these ingredients would make the varnish especially prone to yellowing. See Wadum 1994, pp. 33, 34.

39 During recent cleaning treatments it emerged that Traas had added a fine black pigment to selectively tone the varnish applied to Van Gogh's Antwerp *Portrait of an old woman* (cat. 46) in 1926-27, and a greenish blue pigment to tone the varnish across the rear wall of *The bedroom* (F 482 JH 1608) in 1931. Treatment reports by E. van Duijn, August 2002, and E. Hendriks, December 2010, conservation archives, Van Gogh Museum. Much later, in 1960, he is known to have applied a dammar resin varnish with some addition of black pigment to Vermeer's *Girl with a pearl earring* (The Hague, Mauritshuis). See Wadum 1994, p. 21.

40 Records of paintings transported back and forth in the period November 1950 to August 1961 are preserved in the archives of the Stedelijk Museum. However, it is not always precisely clear what these interventions by Traas entailed.

41 List of Van Goghs restored in the Stedelijk Museum, compiled by Van Beek in June 1978.

42 List of 'gebreken collectie Vincent van Gogh', dated 11 February 1970.

43 For a historical review of developments in wax-resin lining methods see Nicolaus 1999, pp. 117-53.

advances, which included an electrically heated 'hot table' to replace Traas's hand-held iron, new synthetic adhesives as an alternative to traditional beeswax and resin, as well as the occasional use of more stable synthetic lining fabrics instead of linen (such as the semitransparent fibreglass cloth that leaves a trade stamp visible on the back of the original canvas in cat. 91). The purpose of these new alternatives was to provide a more controllable lining procedure, reducing the risk factors of pressure, heat and moisture involved. Yet, though well intended, in hindsight such treatments may have proved more deleterious than the tried and tested manual wax-resin linings carried out by Traas.[44]

Vandalism in 1978

In 1973, the collection was transferred to the newly opened Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh, the forerunner of the present Van Gogh Museum. On 25 April 1978, the museum was faced with a crisis. Around closing time, a mentally disturbed visitor pulled out a sharp pocketknife and mutilated Van Gogh's Paris *Self-portrait with grey felt hat* (cat. 130), slashing diagonally through the canvas in the form of a cross.[45] Since the museum did not yet have its own restoration department, repair of the portrait was to be entrusted to Luitsen Kuiper, chief restorer at the Rijksmuseum. An advisory committee was set up to discuss an appropriate course of treatment for the damaged painting, and its discussions are most interesting, since they reflect a broader gulf in attitudes towards restoration practice in Holland at the time.[46]

At the inaugural committee meeting, Kuiper presented his proposal for the first stage of treatment. This involved renewed wax-resin lining of the support, replacing the old lining canvas that had been removed straight after the incident.[47] Kuiper was a highly experienced practitioner of wax-resin lining, and a strong advocate of the method that was the usual choice for Old Master paintings at the Rijksmuseum. However, Ernst van de Wetering, an art historian employed at the Central Research Laboratory for Objects of Art and Science in Amsterdam (currently the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands), questioned whether it was an appropriate option for the Van Gogh *Self-portrait*. Van de Wetering's concern was that renewed penetration of wax-resin adhesive into the picture support during the process of relining might cause exposed passages of ground to discolour again, further altering the intended colour values in the painting. In his view this danger was exacerbated by the highly absorbent nature of the ground, shown by analysis to consist of barium sulphate pigment bound in caseine.[48] Van de Wetering set out his objections in a report, also pointing out existing criticism for the consequences of the

44 For example, recent examination revealed that the proprietary 'textile glue' used to strip-line the double-sided work (cat. 114) in 1958, had become rock-hard and insoluble, necessitating its short-term mechanical removal. Another example concerns the fibreglass fabric used to line *Sunset in Montmartre* (cat. 91), which, in view of its stiffness, cannot be readily 'peeled' from the original linen should it be necessary to remove the lining. Though the Stedelijk Museum conservators seem to have used wax-resin adhesive exclusively to line the Paris paintings considered here, a PVA t.t.79 (a polyvinyl acetate emulsion) adhesive was employed for the Arles picture, *The pink orchard*, (F555 JH 1380) which was lined on the hot table. On later efforts to remove the discoloured adhesive that had penetrated to the paint surface see Stringari 1991. Finally, regarding the use of early hot tables: in practice it was often difficult to regulate the temperature exactly to ensure an even heating effect across the picture surface.

45 Retrospective report concerning the damaged *Self-portrait with grey felt hat* by Vincent van Gogh, compiled by L. Kuiper in August 1978 and signed by S.H. Levie. The act of vandalism was also reported in several newspapers, including the *Volkskrant* on 26 April 1978.

46 The members of the advisory committee were L. Kuiper and W. Hesterman from the restoration department of the Rijksmuseum, S.H. Levie (director) and H. van Crimpen (curator) from the Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh, J. van Beek from the restoration department of the Stedelijk Museum, and J.A. Mosk (scientist) and E. van de Wetering (art historian) from the Central Research Laboratory.

47 Minutes of the committee meeting held on 12 May 1978.

48 The caseine was identified using thin layer chromatography (TLC), a technique that is no longer employed at RCE for the identification of proteins. Furthermore, the documentation files suggest that the binding medium analysis was somewhat inconclusive, since caseine was identified in two samples, but animal glue in a third one. Besides protein, a small quantity of oil was detected in the ground, thought perhaps to be binding medium soaked in from the overlying paint layers. The pigment was identified as exclusively barytes using X-ray diffraction (XRD).

49 Report dated 30 May 1978.

wax-resin method within the international restoration community at large.[49] Furthermore, he offered several suggestions for alternative lining methods to be considered for the *Self-portrait*, all of which involved the use of modern synthetic materials. In response to his report, the planned treatment was put on hold. Though the issues he raised were discussed at length in the next two committee meetings, the outcome was that the wax-resin lining went ahead as proposed on 4 July 1978.[50] However, the essential point put forward by Van de Wetering, that to formulate an appropriate course of treatment for Van Gogh's paintings requires sound knowledge of the materials and techniques employed, remained a guiding principle for discussions regarding restoration policy at the museum in the following decades.

Mid-1980s condition survey

More than ten years after it opened, the Van Gogh Museum still lacked a professional conservation studio with qualified people able to perform regular maintenance of the collection. Instead the Van Gogh paintings were being treated on an incidental basis by freelance conservators, largely in response to the demands of exhibition loans. Moreover there was an evident need for a conservator specialised in the problems raised by modern (as opposed to Old Master) paintings, and by the specific methods and materials employed by Van Gogh in particular.[51] To get a grip on this situation, the museum had commissioned the Central Research Laboratory to perform a condition survey of the collection in order to help determine a prioritised treatment plan. In January 1984, V.R. Mehra, assisted by Monique Berends, began an in-depth examination and documentation of the paintings, describing the technique and condition of each work, establishing points that warranted further investigation as well as a recommended course of treatment. Mehra had been one of the main protagonists in the debate on wax-resin lining, and from the late 1960s was engaged in the development of safer lining materials and procedures as an alternative to the wax-resin method at the Central Research Laboratory.[52] With this in mind, he devoted particular attention to registering effects thought to result from the wax-resin linings of the Van Gogh paintings.[53] Parallel to this campaign, Ernst van de Wetering, assisted by Brigitte Blauwhoff, was asked to perform a less detailed survey for the remainder of the collection in order to gain a more rapid insight into its overall condition, especially in view of pending loan requests.[54] Based on their joint findings, a proposal for the conservation and restoration of the paintings in the collection of the Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh was submitted to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in July 1985.[55] To implement this plan it was advocated that the museum take on a paintings conservator who would work in close collaboration with the Central Research Laboratory for scientific support. Soon afterwards this was put in practice when the museum was reorganised under a new director, Ronald de Leeuw, employing Cornelia Peres as the first in-house conservator at the museum from December 1986 to October 1998.

In-house conservation studio, 1986-present

Over the past two decades, the treatment plan outlined in the 1980s condition survey has essentially been put into practice. Then, as now, there is a general tendency to regard the wax-resin linings and their consequences as an irrevocable fact, since

50 L. Kuiper's response to the Van de Wetering report, dated 14 June 1978. Minutes of the committee meetings held on 16 June and 30 June 1978. Some of the main reasons put forward in favour of wax-resin relining were the Rijksmuseum's familiarity with that method, the fact that the portrait had already been wax-resin lined, the prime importance given to the tear repair in this instance, and the Rijksmuseum's apprehension regarding the consequences of lining with synthetic materials as an alternative choice.

51 The inherent drawbacks of the situation at the museum were highlighted by an incident that occurred in 1984. Prior to lending *The Zouave* (F 423 JH 1486) to an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, it was treated in a private studio outside the direct supervision of the museum. The museum was thus confronted with the fact that the painting had received a highly inappropriate, very thick and shiny varnish layer just before it was to be sent to the United States. Information taken from a report concerning the restoration of the painting, dated 23 March 1985 and signed by H. van Crimpen.

52 Nicolaus 1999, pp. 119 and 128. Mehra's objection to indiscriminate use of the wax-resin lining method formed part of a broader concern for the need to revise attitudes towards conservation treatment. He advocated the need for both an individual, and a more minimalist step-by-step approach towards the treatment of paintings instead, a view which has gained hold in current thinking in the field of conservation today. Verbal communication from Mehra on 1 May 2006.

53 Mehra submitted interim reports on the condition of the paintings on 8 July 1984 and 12 February 1985, and a final report on 22 May 1986.

54 Van de Wetering and Blauwhoff conducted their examinations between June and October 1984, submitting a provisional report in January 1985 for the whole collection that incorporated Mehra's findings; see Van de Wetering/Blauwhoff 1985.

55 Letter from C.E. van Blommestein, interim director at the Central Research Laboratory, dated 31 July 1985, addressed to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs (WVC).

any attempt to reverse them would involve renewed subjection of the paintings to potentially harmful heat and solvents.[56] Instead, besides essential preventive and remedial conservation work, the focus of treatments at the museum has been to remove discoloured varnish layers and surface grime that mask the generally bright colours intended in Van Gogh's French paintings.[57] Given the artist's preference for high key colours and the measures he took to preserve them, it is hard to imagine that he would have found the mitigating effect of the darkened varnishes acceptable today.[58] The current approach to the French-period paintings is to remove or to thin aged varnishes where safe to do so, which necessitates a judicious approach to cleaning. After cleaning, the paintings may be left unvarnished, or, if necessary, varnished so as to preserve a matt surface effect that is closer to how the pictures were intended to be seen.[59] In addition to such active interventions, priority is given to research aimed at improving methods of preservation and display. With this goal in mind, several degradation phenomena linked to Van Gogh's particular choice of painting materials form the topic of scientific study.[60] It seems from the artist's letters that, although certainly aware of the transient nature of his paintings, he did not anticipate all of the changes that have taken place, or at least not to the full extent to which they have occurred.

56 In Mehra's interim report dated 12 February 1985, by which time he had examined around half the paintings in the collection, he concluded that less than 15% of the paintings required all-over restoration, perhaps involving reversal of the old wax-resin linings or the associated effects. On the other hand, as many as 80-85% of the paintings were said to require surface treatment, that is to say the removal of discoloured varnish layers and surface grime.

57 The following Antwerp and Paris paintings were treated in the period 1987-2005: cats. 46, 49, 50, 80, 90, 93, 94, 98, 106, 109, 111-14, 123-25, 129 and 135.

58 Van Gogh's measures to ensure lasting colour included the use of absorbent supports to draw out oil medium from his paints, and the overly bold use of colours (letter 595) to compensate for change, as discussed on pp. 153-154 and p. 137 respectively.

59 In the galleries, the pictures are displayed behind anti-glare safety glass with UV filtering for protection.

60 In the pictures examined, typical material-related defects encountered were cracking and scaling of paint caused by the artist's application of grounds containing zinc white to cover up abandoned pictures, the fading and degradation of red lake pigments, and the degradation of chrome yellow and red lead paints. On the formation of zinc soaps in the intermediate ground layer of cat. 92, see Keune 2005, pp. 144-50. Concerning the red lake research, see Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, and Burnstock *et al.* 2005 I. On the degradation of chrome yellow paint in a work of the Arles period see Van der Weerd 2002, pp. 147-63, and Van der Weerd *et al.* 2003. See also Monico *et al.* 2011.

Establishing the chronology

Louis van Tilborgh

Several of the paintings in this volume have been given new dates (see Appendix 2), because it turned out that improvements could be made to the chronology of the Antwerp and Paris oeuvres, despite the pioneering work done by Jacob Baart de la Faille in the early 20th century, the supplementary data collected by the editors of the manuscript he left on his death, and later studies, by Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov and Jan Hulsker in particular.[1] Most of the changes are minor, but however small they are important for charting Van Gogh's artistic development accurately.

There were two basic ideas underlying our establishment of the dates: truth is in the detail, and each painting poses its own questions. We gathered as much factual information as possible on every painting – documentary, technical, stylistic and iconographic – and then examined it to see if it contained clues as to the date of the work. In only a few cases were we able to examine relevant paintings in other collections more closely, which means that our proposals have to be treated with a certain amount of caution. Only when all Van Gogh's paintings from this period have been studied in detail can one arrive at a final judgement, assuming there is one, for if history teaches us anything it is above all that interpretations often have less eternal validity than writers hope.

Documentary sources

Van Gogh's correspondence is an important source of information for dating his Antwerp paintings (see cats. 45-50) but not for the Paris oeuvre. There are very few known letters from that period of his life, so in order to arrange the works chronologically we had to rely far more on iconographic, stylistic and technical research. Such letters as there are do contain direct clues, but only for very few works (cats. 74, 75, 115).

Nor are documents by Van Gogh's contemporaries of much help. Apart from a few passages in letters that Theo sent to his family in the Netherlands and that his friend Andries Bonger wrote to his parents, we have little or no information about Vincent's daily life, let alone about his works.[2] Emile Bernard, his best friend during his time in the French capital, only wrote his reminiscences later, as did the British artist Archibald Standish Hartrick, who met Van Gogh at the end of 1886.[3] In 1914 Jo van Gogh-Bonger recorded what she knew of Vincent, which was partly based on what she had been told by Theo, while in 1923 the art critic Gustave Coquiot summarised his own recollections and those of others in an anecdotal narrative.[4]

Although the documentary sources are limited in number, they do contain enough information to resolve one long-standing and key question: the dates of Van Gogh's period in the studio of Fernand Cormon. Contemporaries gave contradictory accounts of the length of his training there, but when the data were com-

1 De la Faille 1928; De la Faille 1939; De la Faille 1970; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 224-37, Hulsker 1977 and Hulsker 1996; see also Feilchenfeldt 2009 for some new suggestions.

2 Both sets of correspondence are in the Van Gogh Museum.

3 Bernard 1994, vol. 1 (see the index there for the relevant passages); and Dorn 1990 II, for Bernard's unpublished 1889 article about his friend. Hartrick, who returned from a trip to Brittany in November 1886 and met Van Gogh at Russell's shortly afterwards, published about him twice (Hartrick 1913, and Hartrick 1939, pp. 39-53, for his meetings with Van Gogh). Antonio Cristobal, also known as Charles Antoine, published a brief article about Van Gogh in 1891 (Cristobal 1891).

4 Letters 1958, vol. 1, pp. XV-LIII, and Coquiot 1923. Fels 1928 contains a few addenda to Coquiot's book.

bined it turned out that only one of their suggestions could stand the test of criticism, and that was the one accepted by Jo but later doubted by art historians, that her brother-in-law had enrolled in the studio in March 1886, remained there for three months, and left at the beginning of June.[5]

Paintings as source material

In addition to Van Gogh's correspondence and the reports of contemporaries, use was of course made of the paintings themselves. They contain a wealth of iconographic, stylistic and technical data, and several subsidiary projects were launched to gather these together. A working group headed by Hans C.M. den Nijs of the Institute for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Dynamics of the University of Amsterdam tried to identify all the botanical species in the scenes. It worked on the assumption that everything seen flowering and growing in the paintings could supply information about when the picture was executed.[6] That approach not only led to a more precise dating of the flower still lifes of 1886 (cats. 68-71), but also proved fruitful for other genres, such as cityscapes and landscapes.

However, a few caveats are in order. It was assumed, for instance, that the flowers in the still lifes were picked out of doors and were not cultivars grown under glass. In addition, the flowering periods we have used are estimates, and generous ones at that. The present flowering seasons of trees and flowers are not the same as they were in the late 19th century, and no research has been carried out on the difference.[7] It should also be realised that a painting is not a photograph. Red or white dots nestling in foliage do not necessarily mean that the object is a chestnut tree in blossom. They could equally well have been applied as lighting or colour effects, and if we had good reason to believe that that was the case we skipped the botanical identification.

Extensive research was also done into the topography of Van Gogh's townscapes, river scenes and views of windmills.[8] Although the results did not so much lead to redatings, it was certainly useful, yielding very specific information about the way in which Van Gogh manipulated urban and rural reality in his panoramas of Paris and his views of the Blute-fin windmill. Occasionally this provided the key to the sequence of depictions of the same subject painted in quick succession (cat. 66, figs. 66c, 66d-i, and cat. 93, figs. 93b-d, for example).

These certainties about chronology and sequence formed the basic framework within which we incorporated the findings of the stylistic and technical investigation of the paintings. We studied the supports, paint structure and composition, which gave us a far better understanding of the development of Van Gogh's painting process, as is explained elsewhere in this book.[9] When combined with the stylistic research this sometimes led to drastic redatings (see cats. 73, 85-87 and 136, for example).

Despite the iconographic and technical study, it was often inevitable that the dates were determined on the basis of style alone. We also made various assumptions about Van Gogh's painting process. For example, it is likely that when tackling a new subject he started by painting it in a small rather than a large size, or if he was short of money, as happened from time to time, he would not use a standard artists' canvas but cheaper supports like artists' *carton*, old, used canvases, or cot-

5 These findings were published in Van Tilborgh 2007.
6 See the Introduction for the working group.
7 The difference we applied is based on estimates. In some cases we were able to make use of weather reports for Paris of 1886-87 (for cat. 103 for instance), which sometimes mention the flowering times of trees and plants (Relevés Météorologiques, Paris, Météo-France). Hans C.M. den Nijs kindly analysed this information for us.
8 The topographical data were first compiled by Nienke Bakker and then by Jan Gorm Madsen, with the assistance from Paris of Gérard Jouhet and André Roussard. Teio Meedendorp helped resolve difficult issues during the preparation of the manuscript.
9 See pp. 90-142, 144-156.

1 Infra-red reflectogram of fig. 9.

2 X-radiograph of *The Blute-fin windmill* (F 273 JH 1116), 1886. Tokyo, Bridgestone Museum.





ton. It has also been assumed that he conducted experiments simply at first, only progressing to a more complex approach later. To take an example, he would have experimented with drastically thinned oil paints in the winter of 1886-87 (see cats. 76-78) before combining that technique with the application of Neo-Impressionist colour principles (cats. 79-82). We also did not find it credible that he worked on two ambitious projects at the same time, which led us to reject the idea that he thoroughly explored both Montmartre and Asnières in the late summer of 1887.[10]

This all resulted in the new chronological order detailed below.[11]

Winter 1885/86-autumn 1886

Van Gogh made at least 16 paintings in Antwerp, only 7 of which have survived (cats. 45-50, fig. 46a).[12] One portrait of a woman has hitherto been assigned variously to the Antwerp and to the Paris periods (cat. 47), but the latter dating proved to be technically and stylistically incorrect. One explanation put forward for the relatively small number of surviving works is that Van Gogh painted over several of them in Paris. A number of the paintings in the museum's collection do have other scenes beneath their surface, but the theory that some of them date from the Antwerp period was not confirmed by our research.[13] Of course, there is a chance that such overpainted works are in collections other than the Van Gogh Museum, but that is only known for certain in one case. That is *Terrace and observation deck at the Moulin Le Blute-fin, Montmartre,* which is now in the Art Institute of Chicago (fig. 9), underneath which there is a view of the backs of houses that Van Gogh painted from the staircase of his Antwerp lodgings (fig. 1, and see cat. 49).

After he moved to Paris in March 1886 he concentrated more on drawing in the next three months than has been suspected so far.[14] Hulsker placed some 20 paintings in the spring of 1886, but Van Gogh certainly did not produce that many.[15]

10 This was the view held by Hulsker 1996, pp. 286-98.
11 In order to avoid giving all the divergent opinions about the date of each work we have taken Hulsker's oeuvre catalogue of 1996 as the last word on the subject at the time, although strictly speaking that is not entirely true (see my review of that catalogue in Van Tilborgh 1997). More detailed information about the dating of the works will be found in the catalogue entries in the present volume.
12 The other nine works are known only from letters 546 (two park scenes, and a view from his lodgings which he later overpainted [see cat. 49]), 547 (portrait of a woman), 548 (cityscape), 549 and 550 (two portraits of women), 554 (a child's head and a study of nude wrestlers). However, it is just possible that the two women's portraits mentioned in letters 548, 549 and 550 are identical with F 206 JH 972 and F 207a JH 1204 (for this question see cats. 47, 48).
13 Only the portrait of a woman underneath *In the café: Agostina Segatori in Le Tambourin* (cat. 84 and fig. 84d) could have been painted in Antwerp (on which see also cat. 45, note 1, and cats. 47, 48).
14 Van Gogh made drawings in Cormon's studio (see Drawings 3, cats. 238-73 and 276-86) and several small sketches of the city (ibid., cats. 228-35). The four drawn studies for the *View of Paris* (cat. 66) are also placed in the spring in both Hulsker 1996, pp. 237, 239, and Drawings 3, cats. 225-27, but in this volume they have been moved to the early summer.
15 See Hulsker 1996, pp. 228-38. That number does not include the works that were later recycled. He dated several flower still lifes to the spring of 1886, along with a number of views of Paris (see cats. 56, 66) and all the small studies after plaster casts (cats. 57-63, 85-87), but we have modified that, which largely explains the difference in numbers.

Three of them were painted in Cormon's studio: *Nude girl, seated* (cat. 51), and two female nudes, both of which he later overpainted with self-portraits (cats. 75, 76). Only around nine paintings are known for certain to have been made outside that studio. They include a self-portrait and two small portraits of women (cats. 52-54), which are dated to this period because of their marked stylistic and technical similarities to *Nude girl, seated* (cat. 51). There are also three landscapes with flowering orchards from that spring (see fig. 3),[16] as well as a small flower still life (fig. 51f) and a third female portrait (fig. 2), although both of them were overpainted shortly afterwards.[17] The scene of rooftops hidden beneath a still life of shoes painted in the autumn of 1886 also dates from the spring of that year (cat. 73, figs. 73c, 73d). It showed the view from Theo's small apartment in rue Laval, where the two brothers lived until early June.

It was only after he had left Cormon's studio and the brothers had moved into the larger apartment in rue Lepic, which had room for a studio for Vincent, that he started painting more than drawing. He made two views from their new home not long after the move (cat. 56, fig. 56d), as well as eight studies of plaster casts (cats. 57-63, fig. 57b), one of which was soon overpainted with a flower still life (fig. 57b and cat. 69). The latter, together with two other small studies of flowers, represented the start of a long exploration of the genre which eventually resulted in some 35 works.[18] This group is dated from late June to mid-September 1886, largely on the evidence of the different flowering times of the individual blooms, from peonies to asters. Van Gogh may have interspersed this long series of still lifes with city scenes and landscapes from time to time (see cats. 64-66). He himself said in his letter to Livens of around November 1886 [569] that he had painted 'a dozen' landscapes since arriving in Paris, which included his recent park scenes (fig. 4).[19]

Hulsker arranged the paintings from this early Paris period fairly loosely in his oeuvre catalogue, as he did the works from the winter of 1886/87, but by concentrating solely on the style and technique and not on the subject it was possible to make a better distinction between the works executed before and after the turn of the year.[20] It was around then that Van Gogh adopted a new, brighter palette and a less loaded brush, with the result, among other things, that two views of windmills

16 F 232 JH 1113 (cat. 55), F 266 JH 1175 (fig.3) and F 271 JH 1186. For the dating of the latter work to the spring of 1886 see Van Tilborgh/Hendriks 2010, p. 404.

17 The flower still life is under *Nude girl, seated* (cat. 51) and the portrait is under *The Blute-fin windmill* (F 273 JH 1116), which was probably painted in the early summer (see Kōdera 1993, pp. 36-38). In theory, two other portraits could also date from this period, but Van Gogh overpainted them in the autumn of 1886 and April 1887 respectively with a park scene (F 225 JH 1110) and the *View from Theo's apartment* (cat. 95), see fig. 95i, and cat. 95, note 18.

18 This number was arrived at as follows. Hulsker dated 41 flower still lifes to 1886 – 4 in the spring, 36 in the summer and 1 to the year in general without specifying a season (Hulsker 1996, Add. 1, p. 484). He placed a further 11 in 1887 – 2 in the spring, 8 in the summer and 1 in the winter of 1887-88. Finally, he dated one work to 1886-87 (Hulsker 1996, Add. 20, p. 486).
Several of those 53 dates are wrong. F 197 JH 1167, F 198 JH 1125 and F 282 JH 1165 are all from Van Gogh's Dutch period, and F 588 JH 1335 is from Auvers-sur-Oise. F 214 JH 1092 and F 244 JH 1093 (cat. 102) were not painted in the spring of 1886 but in the spring of 1887 (see cat. 102, note 7). On the other hand, F 324 JH 1293, the style of which is based on Monticelli's, was not painted in the spring of 1887 but the summer of 1886, as already suggested as early as Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 227.
Hulsker did not include a flower still life from the summer of 1886 in his oeuvre catalogue (see Van Crimpen 1991). Further research will have to show whether a flower still life published by Tralbaut 1969, p. 205, but rejected by De la Faille is by Van Gogh after all. It is also known that he painted a flower piece in the spring of 1886 but then overpainted it with a scene of a nude girl (fig. 51f and cat. 51). He also reused the canvases of four flower pieces from the summer of 1886: F 332 JH 1234 (O'Brian 1988, pp. 154, 155), F 217 JH 1164 (the present authors' own observation), F 332a JH 1233 (auction cat. London [Christie's], 8 December 1999, lot 11), and F 118 JH 932, and there is a very good chance that other works met the same fate (see cats. 92, 93). On top of that, several of the flower still lifes attributed to Van Gogh are not by him at all. The first suspicions were aired by Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 236, 237, with new suggestions coming from Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, and Dorn/Feilchenfeldt 1993, pp. 280-83. The authors of Otterlo 2003, pp. 153-59, rejected three flower pieces (F 246 JH 1133, F 278 JH 1103 and F 327 JH 1126). See Appendix 2 for an overview. This all requires further research, but sometimes the provenances show that they simply cannot be from the Paris period, as is the case with F 199 JH 1091, for example, the authenticity of which was 'zu überprüfen', according to Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424. If one puts the number of flower still lifes wrongly attributed to Van Gogh in Hulsker's oeuvre catalogue at roughly 10, it means that he painted 1 flower piece in the spring of 1886 (see cat. 51, fig. 51f) and at least 35 the following summer.

19 The possible candidates are F 223 JH 1111 (fig. 47d), F 224 JH 1112 (fig. 4), F 225 JH 1110, F 229 JH 1176 (cat. 64), F 230 JH 1177 (cat. 65), F 232 JH 1113 (cat. 55), F 264 JH 1179, F 266 JH 1175 (fig. 64b), F 271 JH 1186, F 273 JH 1116, F 274 JH 1115 (fig. 93b), Add. 2 in Hulsker's oeuvre catalogue, and fig. 6. This is excluding the scene beneath F 203 JH 1123, which is difficult to read, an X-radiograph of which has been published in Otterlo 2003, p. 149. For the dating of the letter see Van Tilborgh/Hendriks 2010, p. 403, note 87.

20 Hulsker often grouped studies with similar subjects together, cases in point being the paintings with a parrot, a kingfisher and a bat (F 14 JH 1193, F 28 JH 1191 [cat. 123], and F 177a JH 1192), which he wrongly believed were made in October-December 1886. Doubts have been cast on the first one, with its highly detailed, almost academic execution (see Appendix 2, note 2). The second one dates from 1887 (cat. 123), and the last one was painted in Nuenen, although probably not in 1885, as assumed in Paintings 1, cat. 44, but at the end of 1884.



3 *The hill of Montmartre* (F 266 JH 1175), 1886. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.



4 *Scene in a park* (F 224 JH 1112), 1886. Private collection.





5 *Café terrace in Montmartre (La guinguette)* (F 238 JH 1178), 1886. Paris, Musée d'Orsay.

6 *The Moulin Le Blute-fin* (F – JH –), 1886. Heino/Wijhe and Zwolle, Museum de Fundatie.



7 *Earthenware bowl with potatoes* (F 118 JH 932), 1886. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen.

which Hulsker dates to the autumn of 1886, as well as the above-mentioned *Terrace and observation deck at the Moulin Le Blute-fin, Montmartre* (fig. 9), were executed in early 1887, as will be explained below.[21] Three of the eleven studies of plaster casts would date from then as well (cats. 85-87). Hitherto they had all been regarded as a single unit.

Van Gogh's output certainly fell off after the summer of 1886. In addition to the park scenes with trees in autumnal colours mentioned above, of which there are four in all (see fig. 4), another work which can definitely be allocated to this period is the café terrace with autumnal trees (fig. 5), and probably the '2 views of the Moulin de la Galette' that he mentioned in his letter to Charles Angrand of late October 1886 [570] as well.[22] *Prawns and mussels* (cat. 72) has much in common stylistically with the terrace (fig. 5), so would come from the same period, along with the view of the mill rediscovered in 2010 (fig. 6), which seems to have been painted around October, judging by the yellowish and bare trees.[23]

In addition, we know from the letter to Livens that Van Gogh was also trying his hand at portraits again: 'I lately did two heads which I dare say are better in light and colour than those I did before' [569]. Here he was referring to two self-portraits (cats. 74, 75), which are the only eligible works from the period.[24] They are more

21 They are F 272 JH 1183 (fig. 9), F 348 JH 1182 (fig. 104a; proposed by Tellegen 2001), and F 349 JH 1184 (fig. 10; suggested by Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 233). The group is placed in the early winter in De la Faille 1970, while Hulsker opted for the autumn of 1887. Some of the trees in F 349 JH 1184 (fig. 10) and F 271 JH 1186 are already sprouting, so these paintings can be dated to roughly the middle of April, as can F 348a JH 1221 (fig. 93d), in which there are dandelions as well as a few bare trees. See note 16 above for F 271 JH 1186, which Hulsker also dated to the autumn of 1886.

22 *Café terrace in Montmartre (La guinguette)* is F 238 JH 1178. The autumnal scenes are F 224 JH 1112, F 225 JH 1110 and Add. 2 in Hulsker 1996, p. 484. The candidates for the two views of the Moulin de la Galette mentioned in letter 570 are F 274 JH 1115 (fig. 93b), which was painted in August-September 1886, judging by the sunflowers; F 273 JH 1116, which was probably made in the early summer; one of the two almost identical versions of the entrance to impasse des Deux Frères (F 227 JH 1170 and F 228 JH 1171), which probably date from the late summer or the autumn; the scene beneath cat. 74 (fig. 74a), which shows part of impasse des Deux Frères with the Blute-fin mill in the background; and *The Moulin Le Blute-fin* (fig. 6).

23 This work has been published in Van Tilborgh/Hendriks 2010.

24 Further research is needed to determine whether the self-portrait whose authenticity is doubted also dates from this period (F 178v JH 1198); see Dorn/Feilchenfeldt 1993, p. 296.



8 *Portrait of Julien Tanguy* (F 263 JH 1202), 1887. Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek.

tonal than the preceding flower still lifes and autumnal scenes, and that ties in with four paintings which, on the evidence of the flower still lifes beneath them and the rather dark palette, were also painted in the late autumn. They are three studies of shoes (cat. 73, figs. 73a, 73b), and *Earthenware bowl with potatoes* (fig. 7), which used to be placed in the Nuenen period.[25]

Winter 1886/87-winter 1887/88

The chronology of Van Gogh's oeuvre after the autumn of 1886 has been arrived at as follows. A solid anchorage is provided by his *Portrait of Julien Tanguy*, with its inscription 'janvier 87', now severely discoloured (fig. 8).[26] There are further fixed points in the shape of two still lifes (cats. 79, 81). Hulsker placed them in the spring of 1887, but since the crocus and hyacinth bulbs are in flower an earlier date of January-February 1887 seems more plausible.

Unlike the paintings from the preceding six months, these three were not executed with a loaded brush. They are actually thinly painted throughout, which led us to group the other paintings in the same technique around them. It is a method found not only in still lifes and portraits, but in landscapes and city scenes as well (broadly speaking cats. 76-96, fig. 9), and the latter can be accurately dated from internal evidence. The trees are bare in almost all of them (cats. 92-95), which means that they were painted in the period March to mid-April 1887,[27] that is to say after the worst of the winter was over (it was only from the end of February

25 X-radiography has revealed that all four are painted over flower still lifes. *Earthenware bowl with potatoes* (F 118 JH 932) has been lined, but according to a later annotation there was a stamp on the back of the original canvas from the Paris firm of Tasset et L'Hôte. The brushwork is strikingly similar to that of Van Gogh's largest still life with shoes, F 332 JH 1234 (fig. 73b).
26 Seven still lifes and a self-portrait are also inscribed '87' or '1887': F 263a JH 1199 (cat. 77), F 337 JH 1229 (cat. 80), F 340 JH 1239 (cat. 89), F 383 JH 1339 (cat. 128), F 333 JH 1236, F 375 JH 1329, F 376 JH 1331 and F 379 JH 1341.
27 Three landscapes can be dated to mid-April. There is already foliage on some of the trees in F 349 JH 1184 (fig. 10) and F 271 JH 1186, so these scenes would have been painted around the middle of April, as could F 348a JH 1221 (fig. 93d), in which there are dandelions as well as some bare trees.



9 *Terrace and observation deck at the Moulin Le Blute-fin, Montmartre* (F 272 JH 1183), 1887. Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago, Helen Birch Bartlett Memorial Collection.

that it was warm enough outdoors to exchange the studio for *plein-air* studies) but before the trees came into bud (fig. 10).[28]

The remaining still lifes, portraits and self-portraits in highly thinned paint were then subdivided according to Van Gogh's stylistic and technical progress. Two of the self-portraits (cats. 76, 77), for example, are a little less thinly painted, from which it is assumed that they preceded the portrait of Tanguy and were probably his first, cautious experiments with this manner of painting.[29] The other works are arranged on the basis of the idea that experiments begin simply and then grow in complexity. This means that the paintings in which Van Gogh used thinned paint and worked with contrasting colours in small segments are later than those in the first technique alone. It thus became clear to us that Van Gogh first applied the Neo-Impressionist doctrine in still lifes (cats. 79-82) before using it for landscapes and city scenes (cats. 91-95). His style became more draughtsman-like in the process, and his palette bolder.

The trees and plants provide important clues for dating the works from the following period: May to the autumn of 1887. There are some 60 in all, almost half of them in the Van Gogh Museum (cats. 99-125). Flowering chestnut trees, for example, would have been seen in May (cats. 103, 104), a fuchsia in mid-May to mid-June (cat. 105), wildflowers like cornflowers and poppies in mid-June to mid-July (cat. 110), the red berries of a bramble bush in July (cat. 113), and sunflowers at the end of July and in August (cats. 114, 115). The latter are found in Van Gogh's large views of Montmartre (cat. 115, fig. 115a), so contrary to what Hulsker suggests those works have to be seen as the crown on his exploration of *plein-air* painting that began in Asnières, and not as the start of it.

28 See cat. 91, note 9.
29 Those very first experiments may well include the still lifes with smoked herrings, F 283 JH 1120 and F 203 JH 1123.



10 *The Moulin Le Poivre* (F 349 JH 1184), 1887. Private collection.

Van Gogh later dated his forays to that riverside village to both the spring and summer of 1887, and here we have defined that as the period mid-May to the end of July.[30] The former is based on an aside in a letter he wrote to Theo in the middle of July 1887: 'when I started working at Asnières I had lots of canvases and Tanguy was very good to me' [571]. It is clear from the letter that he was short of canvas prior to his excursions to the village but that from then on Tanguy let him have artists' supplies free of charge. It is known that he painted many of his works on cheap supports up to around the middle of May 1887 (cats. 91-93, 95, 103), which means that his canvases with scenes from Asnières can be dated after that.

It is known that he was still reusing canvases in mid-May from two still lifes of skulls (cats. 99, 100) and a small view of a park (cat. 101). They are on top of scenes from Nuenen that were covered over with paint of the same composition. Stylistically they are very comparable, with intertwined, partially overlapping brushstrokes.[31] This small group can be dated from the park scene, which is recognisably

30 Van Gogh speaks of the spring in letter 571 and the summer in letter 574.
31 There is also a self-portrait that was painted over a Nuenen scene (cat. 129). The same covering layer was used as in cats. 99-101, but its style is different. We date this painting to September-October 1887.

11 *Wheatfield with poppies* (F 562 JH 1483), 1887. Jerusalem, The Israel Museum.

12 *Butterflies* (F 460 JH 1676), 1887. Private collection.









13 *View of a viaduct in Asnières* (F 239 JH 1267), 1887. New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Thannhauser Collection, gift Justin K. Thannhauser.

14 View of Asnières, the quay, c. 1910. Private collection.

an exploratory study for the large *Garden with courting couples: Square Saint-Pierre* (cat. 104). There are flowering chestnut trees in the latter work, which means that the preceding study (cat. 101) and the two still lifes were made before the middle of May, when those trees would have been in blossom.

While it is possible to date the start of Van Gogh's trips to Asnières it is not quite so clear when they ended. Here we have decided on the end of July, when Van Gogh was anyway returning to landscape subjects on the hill of Montmartre and concentrating on allotments with sunflowers (cat. 114, fig. 114c, cat. 115, figs. 115a, 115d). We have given earlier dates to all the paintings of subjects in and around Asnières, roughly from May to July, unless the vegetation contained botanical clues for a more precise dating (cats. 105-07, 109, 110). Two other paintings can be added to the oeuvre from this period: *Wheatfield with poppies* and *Butterflies* (figs. 11, 12).



15 *Interior of a restaurant* (F 549 JH 1572), 1887. Private collection.

They have long been placed in 1888 and 1889 respectively, but their style has more in common with the works from the spring and early summer of 1887.[32]

It is fairly certain that Van Gogh was once again very short of canvas in July 1887. Tanguy's wife had discovered her husband's generosity and put a stop to it, which created new financial difficulties for Van Gogh.[33] As was the case before his trips to Asnières, he was forced to economise, and decided to reuse old canvases. He did so for several woodland scenes near the village (see cats. 111-13), which were probably the last works he painted there, at least if one assumes that they preceded his large views of the hill of Montmartre. His decision to paint on the backs of works from Nuenen would have been prompted by the same need to economise (cats. 114, 116-20, fig. 116a), but because we do not know how long he was short of funds their dates are a little more elastic, namely mid-summer. His financial problems must have been acute, though, because he also decided to save money on paint by turning to watercolours, something he had not done for a long time.[34] A little later, equally significantly, he started working on cheap cotton instead of the more expensive canvas (see cat. 124).

As in the autumn of 1886, Van Gogh's output fell off in the closing months of 1887. From September he began concentrating on still lifes with autumn fruits, portraits and self-portraits. One exception, though, is *View of a viaduct in Asnières* (fig. 13), which was obviously painted in the autumn, as can be seen from the orange-yellow appearance of the trees. It was probably made in the course of Van Gogh's joint visits to Asnières with Emile Bernard, for it shows an underpass cutting through the embankment close to the station and the Seine (fig. 14).[35] This work can be dated from its internal evidence, but that is not the case with the other works from the period. He painted some 30 in all before leaving for Arles, of which the museum has 11, and almost all of them can only be ordered on the basis of their

32 This suggestion is partly prompted by letter 589, in which two so far unidentified paintings from the Paris oeuvre are referred to as 'the butterflies' and 'the field of poppies'. The problem is that De la Faille omitted *Wheatfield with poppies* from the manuscript for the updated edition of his oeuvre catalogue (see De la Faille 1970, p. 236), but his doubts were not shared by the editors of that edition. The brushwork of *Butterflies* is almost identical to that of F 315 JH 1320. *Wheatfield with poppies* has more parallels with a study like F 309 JH 1315, but more research is required in order to be absolutely certain about this dating to the spring or summer of 1887.
33 He had only 'two louis left' (letter 571).
34 For the watercolours see Drawings 3, cats. 317-20.
35 With thanks to Teio Meedendorp. The painting, which is difficult to read due to the very dirty layer of varnish, is placed in the early summer of 1887 and the spring of that year by De la Faille 1970 and Hulsker 1996 respectively, but Welsh-Ovcharov rightly identified it as an autumn scene (Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 239). She believed that it was of an underpass in the Paris fortifications. On this see Endicott Barnett *et al* 1992, p. 169.

stylistic and technical evolution (see cats. 126-37). Inspired by Bernard, Van Gogh began experimenting with a highly stylised, abstract approach, and like the works from the beginning of the year they can only be arranged on the basis of the theory that new ideas begin simply and then become complex.

The sequence opens with the still lifes in which Van Gogh practised the stylisation of his graphic brushwork, which was loosely based on the Neo-Impressionist model (see cats. 126-28, figs. 126b, 126c). He then applied his new style in four self-portraits (cats. 129, 130, figs. 129a, 130b), the first of which has long been incorrectly dated to 1888. The stylisation then continued, but now with a new angle of approach in which he was inspired by the decorative compositions of Japanese prints with their areas of solid colour. This is demonstrated by his three copies after such prints (cats. 131-33), of which *Flowering plum orchard: after Hiroshige* (cat. 131), which was conceived as an exercise in simplified, flat colours, would have been the first. Hulsker believes that these three works were made in the summer of 1887, but they are only comprehensible and explicable in the context of Van Gogh's collaboration with Bernard. He would then go on to incorporate the lessons he had learned in an autonomous work, *Piles of French novels* (cat. 134).

Van Gogh's ambition was now growing apace, and his larger portraits and still lifes (cats. 136, 137, fig. 134c) would have been painted after cats. 131-34. Although it is smaller, the *Interior of a restaurant* can also be placed in the last three or four months of his stay in Paris (fig. 15).[36] It was long thought to date from the summer of 1888, but it is so closely related stylistically, iconographically and technically to the large *Portrait of Etienne-Lucien Martin* (cat. 136) that it must have been painted at almost the same time. Van Gogh's very last Paris painting, in any event, was his ambitious self-portrait inscribed '[18]88' (cat. 137).

36 See cat. 136 and note 2 of Appendix 2 for similar dating problems.

From Realist to modernist. Van Gogh meets the Parisian avant-garde

Louis van Tilborgh

'But [...] one has to learn to see and learn to live' [155]

Vincent van Gogh was sometimes more flexible than one would expect from his idealistic and stubborn nature. In his Dutch period he had set his heart on becoming an artist in the mould of Jean-François Millet, the peasant painter *sans pareil*, yet at the end of 1885 he dropped that lofty ideal with no apparent regret. After living for two years in Nuenen in the southern Dutch province of Brabant he left for Antwerp on 24 November, where he overcame his ingrained disdain for 'plaster statue copiers' and enrolled at the local art academy [526].

Initially he planned to return to Brabant in the spring of 1886, but changed his mind when his course finished. At the end of February he travelled to Paris, where he moved in with his brother Theo and continued his academic experiment in the studio of Ferdinand Piestre, better known as Ferdinand Cormon. He eventually decided that the training he received there was 'not [...] so useful as I had expected it to be' [569] and left the studio at the beginning of June.[1] The nature of his work then changed spectacularly. He fell under the influence of such disparate models as the Provençal painter Adolphe Monticelli, Impressionism, Neo-Impressionism and Japanese prints, and when he left for Arles on 19 February 1888 he had been transformed from a Realist with an idealistic message into a true modernist who wanted to build on the achievements of the Impressionists.[2] His need to testify to the great value of life, peasant life in particular, became subordinated to his urge to take part in the ongoing debate about the direction that modern art should take now that Realism had had its day.

Seen in retrospect, that change was as phenomenal as it is incomprehensible. How could someone who believed that 'the FIGURE OF THE PEASANT IN ACTION' lay at 'the heart of modern art' [515] become enamoured in the short space of a year with Monticelli, who excelled in *fêtes galantes* and still lifes? How could someone who regarded 'Millet, not Manet' as the 'essential modern painter' [428], and who had made the dark palette an article of faith, turn into a champion of Japanese prints and of the Impressionists and Neo-Impressionists?[3] How does such a process unfold? Or to put it another way: how could he replace his revolutionary ideals with their opposites?

The change can be explained as the logical evolution of a painter who was confronted in Paris with the realisation that the taste for the School of Barbizon and the Hague School that he had developed back in the Netherlands was not up-to-date but *passé*, and it was this that forced him to adapt.[4] There is a certain truth in this, although Van Gogh had certainly learned a little about Impressionism before arriving in the French capital. While working in the Paris art trade in the 1870s he had 'only seen very few paintings' by their predecessor Manet [428], among them

1 On this see Van Tilborgh 2007.

2 Opinions differ as to what 'modernism' is, when it originated, and which artists are covered by the term. It is used here merely to denote the developments and discussions in art after Realism. Van Gogh spoke of 'Impressionism', but it would only cause confusion if we adopted that term. The traditional view is that modernism consisted of 'the steadily more obtrusive inflections of style [...] that apparently began moving painting away from figurative representation toward abstraction', and I agree with that, although it should be added that the question is far more complex than suggested by this excellent formulation by Kirk Varnedoe (Varnedoe 1989, p. 15).

3 Letter 428. And on top of that: how could Van Gogh later regard Manet as the trailblazer for modern art: 'But the painter of the future is a *colourist such as there hasn't been before*. Manet prepared the ground' [604].

4 He described his metamorphosis himself as the transition from a predominantly grey, that is to say tonal, palette to one with bright, unmixed colours. Before coming to Paris he had been 'enthusiastic about grey, or rather, absence of colour', he wrote in 1888 [628]. Or as he put it to his sister Willemien a year earlier: 'Last year I painted almost nothing but flowers to accustom myself to a colour other than grey, that's to say pink, soft or bright green, light blue, violet, yellow, orange, fine red' [574].



1 Edouard Manet, *Repose: portrait of Berthe Morisot*, 1870. Providence, Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, bequest of Mrs. Edith Stuyvesant Vanderbilt Gerry.

2 Claude Monet, *The church at Vétheuil*, 1880. Hampshire, Southampton City Art Gallery.



Repose: portrait of Berthe Morisot of 1870 (fig. 1) and *Le bon bock* of 1873 (Philadelphia Museum of Art),[5] and after he had decided to become an artist Theo told him about the aims of the new movement. However, Van Gogh found it difficult to get a clear, coherent idea of what the Impressionists were. In 1883 he read Zola's analysis of Manet's work in *Mes haines*, but despite this and what he had been told by Theo, their goals were still 'not entirely clear' to him a year later [450].

No matter what his brother wrote as a trend-spotter, there was little change in this.[6] 'There's a school – I believe – of – Impressionists,' he wrote in the spring of 1885, 'but I don't know much about it' [495]. Due to his preference for the dark palette of the School of Barbizon he was 'not particularly curious about or eager for something different or newer' [450]. He also dismissed what he did know about it, and did so with his usual dogmatic assertiveness: 'Some 10, 15 years ago people started to talk about "clarity of light". It's true that originally this was a good thing; it's a fact that masterly things came about as a result of that system. But where it increasingly degenerates into an overproduction of paintings where all through the painting – in all 4 corners the same light, the same what I think they call day tone and local colour dominates, is this a good thing??? I think not' [535].

However, this is not to say that he shut his eyes completely to what was considered to be the very latest thing in Paris. He very much wanted to be kept informed about 'what the present aim is' [467], and in the spring of 1885 that information made him start doubting the rightness of the course he had chosen. This only had real consequences in the autumn, when his 'bleak' dark palette began to 'thaw', to quote his own words about his switch to a more colourful approach [537], and it seems that those first tentative steps towards modernisation found a logical continuation in Paris, when he had his first opportunity to study the very latest paintings in detail.[7]

As I said, there is a germ of truth in this interpretation, but Van Gogh's striving for modernity and topicality is certainly not the only explanation for the changes that took place in his oeuvre between 1885 and 1888. There were several factors at play, including the need to sell his work, and an altered feeling for art. Those two elements were closely related, and if one has to posit a hierarchical relationship with the striving for modernity mentioned above, then in my view they were far more important and also preceded it.

The need to sell

Van Gogh felt that he had to leave Nuenen at the end of 1885. No one wanted to pose for him any more, so he was no longer able to record life and work on the land.[8] He thought of returning to Drenthe in order to continue on his path of becoming a peasant painter, but in the end opted to move to Antwerp.[9] This meant abandoning his peasant repertoire, 'with much regret', as he acknowledged a long time later [854].

The reason for his decision was economic, not artistic. He had been financially dependent on Theo since 1882, but hated the position it put him in.[10] He preferred not to eat the bread of charity, and did not want to see their friendship 'degenerating into *patronage*. [...] And this is what it's threatening more and more to come down to', as he wrote in 1884. 'I don't choose to become your protégé, Theo. Why?

5 Letter 428, note 10. He may also have known Manet's *Argenteuil* of 1874 (Tournai, Musée des Beaux-Arts), *The balcony* of 1868-69 (Paris, Musée d'Orsay) and *Young man in the costume of a Majo* of 1863 (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art); see ibid.
6 Impressionism is explicitly mentioned in letters 288, 359, 450, 467, 495 and 500, and is implicit in Vincent's discussion with Theo about the use of black, which the moderns had outlawed. Emile Zola's *Mes haines, causeries littéraires et artistique*, Paris 1879, is first mentioned in letter 358.
7 This is actually the interpretation in Rewald 1956, pp. 11-77.
8 Letter 541. The Catholic priest had forbidden his parishioners to pose for Van Gogh, who was accused of getting one of his models pregnant. The matter had been simmering since early September (see letters 531 and 534).
9 He mentions both options in letter 541.
10 His own ideas about the marketability of his work are briefly discussed in Van Tilborgh/Van Uitert 1990, pp. 16-19. For his expectations of Theo as his dealer see Van Tilborgh 1999 I and Van Uitert 2007, pp. 7-27.



3 *The potato eaters*, 1885 (F 82 JH 764). Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

Because' [436]. However, as a novice artist with an unusual taste and limited contacts in the art world, he had very little opportunity to start standing on his own two feet in the immediate future. He could do little more than try to convince his brother of the need for him to act as the champion of his art. Theo, though, found Vincent's work unsaleable, whereupon their respective 'gun barrels' were pointed 'in opposite directions' for a long time [463].

That changed in the spring of 1885, when Theo agreed to show Vincent's work to other people.[11] Their relationship improved, but there were no concrete results. Van Gogh's ambitious *Potato eaters* (fig. 3), which he sent to Paris, attracted more criticism than praise, and the paintings that he sent later did not receive the approval he had hoped for either. At the beginning of the summer Theo refused to help him pay off some old debts, and when Vincent realised at the end of August that his brother would not carry on supporting him come what may, it was time for him to take some steps himself.[12] He concluded that, because of 'the decided weakening of the financial aid', it was necessary to create sound economic prospects for himself, independently of Theo [527].[13]

That, though, put him in a difficult position. If he seriously wanted to do business and build a reputation for himself he simply had to move from the country to a city. That, however, would put an end to his figure painting in the tradition of Millet, and would also be a moral defeat.[14] Boosting his economic prospects, though, was by now just as important as cherishing lofty artistic ideals. He took the plunge in mid-November, when he not only had no models any more but was forced by the cold to abandon working outdoors.[15] 'My plan is to go to Antwerp,' he told Theo [541]. The criticism of *The potato eaters* (fig. 3) had shown him that his figure painting was still way below the standard necessary for him to sell his work, but he felt that he had a better chance of success with other, less ambitious genres in the port city, especially portraits and cityscapes, which would amount to a considerable artistic compromise on his part.[16]

It was the same hope of financial success in the spring of 1885 that had made him doubt the wisdom of his dark palette, which had been inspired by the School of Barbizon. Theo had promised to show his work to other art dealers, and Vincent

11 On this see Van Tilborgh/Van Uitert 1990, p. 11.
12 Van Gogh owed money to the Hague colourman Wilhelmus Johannes Leurs, and because Theo had been unable to let him have anything extra he said that he was forced to exhibit works there; see Van Tilborgh/Van Uitert 1990, p. 12. After their father's death on 26 March 1885 Theo became the breadwinner for the entire family but did not want to commit himself unreservedly to supporting Vincent, as became clear to the latter during Theo's visit to Nuenen at the end of July and beginning of August 1885; see Stolwijk 1999, pp. 37, 38.
13 He encapsulated their discussion about the future finances as follows: 'I can sum up your answer to my question thus: "there may be a storm coming but, even in that case, don't count on either caulking or provisions, and be aware that I may be compelled by the force of circumstances to cut the tow-rope"' [524].
14 Soon after his arrival in Nuenen he had proclaimed, with a reference to his old teacher Anton Mauve, that he would remain faithful to his calling as a peasant painter, come what may ('I'll be *poor*, I'll be a *painter*, I want to remain *human*, *in* nature' [414]). And when, after his father's death, he suspected that his mother would be leaving Nuenen, he told Theo, unasked, that he would carry on living in the village 'for the rest of my life' [490]: 'I believe that you thought differently about it, and that you would perhaps rather see me take another course as regards where I live. But I sometimes think that you have more idea of what people can do in the city, yet on the other hand I feel more at home in the country'.
15 In letter 542 he reported that it was freezing, 'so it's no longer possible to work outdoors'. In February 1886 he planned to return to Nuenen to help his mother move to Breda, on which see Wouters 2003, pp. 11-14.
16 See letter 541.

realised that his sombre paintings were likely to attract criticism. The modern taste in Paris demanded something else, even in the peasant genre, because artists like Bastien-Lepage and Lhermitte were by now working with a far lighter palette than Millet had done before them. Even before he sent off his dark *Potato eaters* he wrote that he had thought a great deal about 'the *light* paintings of the present day' [499], but it is clear from his words that he did not really know what it was that he had to change. He knew of the method that had been introduced by Corot and was popular among the artists of the Hague School for making a light painting by putting a lot of 'white in the wine of colour' [500], but did not consider that suitable, because it would rob the low spectrum of its force, and it was essential that 'fieriness remains'. But do you think, he asked rhetorically, 'that I don't like any light paintings?'

After he had heard the criticism of *The potato eaters* he did consider painting 'in a lighter spectrum' [506]. Although he still 'wanted to succeed on the gloomy side too', he did now feel that trying to work with a more colourful and brighter palette was a serious alternative. However, he had several technical problems to overcome. By working out of doors in the summer some studies turned out 'much brighter' [513], but as yet there was no question of him embarking on a fresh course. At the beginning of August he learned that Theo had acquired a work by the 'COLOURIST *landscape painter*' Claude Monet for Boussod, Valadon & C[ie] [528], and his brother's investment in art which he, Vincent, rejected, increased the pressure (fig. 2).[17] A little later he wrote that 'as regards the colour, I'm not predisposed to always paint dark' [519], but as noted above, there is clearly more colour in his work from October onwards. It speaks volumes that he did not take a single dark painting of a peasant subject with him to Antwerp, and all that he offered the art dealers there were three of his recent, more colourful pieces (figs. 7, 8).[18]

This search for ways of making his art more saleable went hand in hand with a broadening of his artistic interests. In the autumn of 1885, for instance, he read *Chérie* by Edmond de Goncourt, in which the author characterised himself and his brother as the true leaders of 'the search for truth in literature' and as the champions of 'the revival of 18th-century art, the triumph of Japonism'.[19] Van Gogh knew next to nothing about the latter two movements, but with his new-found interest in everything that was marketable and topical abroad he immediately began familiarising himself with 18th-century French art, and the importance of Japonism resonated in his mind when he chanced upon some Japanese prints on arriving in Antwerp.[20] He bought them and then began seeing his new surroundings with different eyes. 'One of De Goncourt's sayings was "*Japonaiserie for ever*". Well, these docks are one huge *Japonaiserie*, fantastic, singular, strange – at least so one can see them' [545].[21]

That last remark shows that it was not so much Van Gogh's palette or iconography that changed as his taste. By the end of his stay in Nuenen there was evidently room in his mind for new views that differed from his earlier standpoints, and that room expanded rapidly. However, this broadening of his taste cannot be explained solely on economic grounds. It would certainly not have blossomed if he had not been receptive to it artistically in some way or other, which brings us to the second factor: his altered feeling for art.

17 Theo had bought the painting on 7 April, but Vincent probably did not hear about it until his brother's visit to Nuenen at the end of July and beginning of August; see letter 528. Its purchase is described in Stolwijk 1999, pp. 37, 111, and 195, note 107.
18 The third painting was a 'large mill on the heath in the evening' [542]. It has not survived, but given its late date it too would have been brightly coloured.
19 Edmond de Goncourt, *Chérie*, Paris 1884, pp. XV-XVI; the book is first mentioned in letter 534.
20 Van Gogh then read De Goncourts' *L'art du dix-huitième siècle*; see letters 535, 536, 538 and 539.
21 The quotation from the De Goncourts is from Philippe Burty, *Maîtres et petits maîtres*, Paris 1877, p. 274, which Van Gogh had probably borrowed from Anton Kerssemakers; see letter 542, note 10.

Van Gogh's earliest theory of art

Van Gogh initially regarded social commitment as being more important than form in his art, but that view weakened towards the end of his time in Nuenen. He had gradually come to understand that the secret of beautiful work lay not so much in the content as in the autonomous use of the elements of art, colour above all. It is difficult to follow in detail this process of a growing sense of the autonomy of the palette, and of the associated brushstroke, but the broad outlines become visible if one reconstructs his view of art from its very beginnings. It is impossible to interpret his artistic development in Paris without taking that look back to the past, which is why we must now examine his very earliest ideas about art.

When Van Gogh decided to pursue a career as an artist in 1880 he had a fairly intuitive and expressive theory of art that had been propagated by Romanticism. He felt that he was a Realist, but in no way did he strive for objectivity. It was not a matter of an accurate, unbiased depiction of nature but of an expression of one's own 'human feeling' [371]. The underlying personal emotion felt when depicting what he saw – that was paramount. The viewer had to see that good art was made 'with a *will*, with *emotion*, with *passion*, with *love*' [515], so Emile Zola's definition of a work of art as 'a corner of nature seen through a temperament' might have been written for him.[22]

One of the tenets of the Realists was that an artist had to be true to his own truth and nothing else, but Van Gogh went further than them in giving that truth a decidedly moral dimension.[23] Good art was associated with the 'honesty of sentiment' expressed [288], and was thus basically a test of character. Or, as he wrote in 1882: 'Almost no one knows that the secret of beautiful work is to a large extent good faith and sincere feeling' [291]. This moralistic credo cannot be divorced from his old outlook of life, which had been largely shaped by Protestantism, with echoes of the ideas of Thomas Carlyle, who had proclaimed 'sincerity' to be the chief characteristic of the true spiritual elite in his *On heroes, hero-worship and the heroic in history* of 1852.[24]

Van Gogh was not being very academically correct by attaching so much importance to the expression of pure feeling. Speaking of the French writer Jules Michelet, whom he greatly admired, he confessed that 'M. feels strongly, and what he feels he slaps on without troubling himself in the least about how he does it, and without thinking in the least about "*technique*" or generally accepted forms' [312]. Van Gogh did want to convey the illusion of reality as convincingly as possible in his work, but it was not an end in itself.[25] He himself would '*keep producing work* in which people [...] can find faults', as he wrote in 1885 in defence of his *Potato eaters* (fig. 3), but he hoped that his work would have 'a certain life of its own and *raison d'être* that will overwhelm those faults' [528].

In his view, that 'life' lay not only in approaching nature as honestly as possible in a way governed by one's own 'sentiment', but also in a forceful, even brutal expression that would best do justice to his own temperament. In addition to 'truth, loyalty, honesty', he was above all looking for what he called 'manly strength' [332]. He did not want to draw 'carefully and softly' [354] but liked brazen, powerful effects, as in 'an etching with no burr' [217], and preferred coarse carpenters' pencils to 'Faber B, BB, BBB', rough paper to smooth, and pen drawings to watercolours [222].[26] He began working this way in his drawings in 1882, inspired by an

22 Emile Zola, *Mes haines*, Paris 1879, p. 25; Van Gogh quoted that passage in letters 361 and 492. On the origins of this expressive view of art see Abrams 1971, pp. 21-26, 88-99, 318-20, and see also Shiff 1984, pp. 15-38.

23 On the Realists' views about being true to one's own truth see Nochlin 1971, pp. 34-37.

24 Carlyle saw 'sincerity' in the behaviour of all great men in history and held that up as a mirror for his own generation, which he felt was being overwhelmed by materialism. 'To every poet, to every writer, we might say: Be true, if you would be believed. Let a man but speak forth with genuine earnestness the thought, the emotion, the actual condition of his own heart'; quoted in Abrams 1971, p. 319. The book Van Gogh is referring to is *On heroes, hero-worship and the heroic in history. Six lectures: reported, with emendations and additions* London 1852. Van Gogh knew this book before he decided to become an artist. He quoted from it in his poetry album of 1875 (see Pabst 1988, p. 25) and re-read it in the autumn of 1883, from which one can deduce that he felt that its message was very important (letter 394).

25 Rummens 1994, believed that Van Gogh was aiming for *gaucherie*, deliberately expressive awkwardness. He repeated this view in his 'De aardappeleters: bron en interpretatie. Een pleidooi voor het onderzoek naar begrippen', in Saskia de Bodt *et al.* (eds.), *Studiecollectie. Interpretaties van kunst uit de negentiende en twintigste eeuw. Dertien opstellen voor Evert van Uitert*, Amsterdam 2001, pp. 89, 90. I do not believe that this was the case. Van Gogh wanted to be as unaffected as possible in his art, which could lead to it looking awkward, but he was prepared to accept that, which is not entirely the same as *gaucherie*.

26 For his drawing technique at the time see Van Heugten 1996, pp. 25-30.



4 After Samuel Luke Fildes, *Houseless and hungry*, from: *The Graphic* 1 (4 December 1869). Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



5 *Pollard birches* (F 1240 JH 469), 1885. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

unusual model: robust engravings, especially those in the English magazine *The Graphic* (figs. 4, 5).

However, that search for roughness of expression could not be allowed to end in virtuosity. A display of technique as an end in itself ran counter to the demand of pure feeling. Van Gogh saw something 'in dexterity and technical knowledge about art that reminds me of what, in religion, they'd call self-righteousness' [332].[27] As an artist one had to be a '*speaker of truth*', and by definition such a person 'has little *oratorical chic*' [439], as he wrote in 1884.[28] The 'purpose and *non plus ultra* of art' was not 'singular *spots* of colour – that waywardness in the drawing, that which is called distinction of technique? Certainly not. [...] *One* MUST therefore *work* on technique in so far as one must say what one feels better, more accurately, more profoundly, but – with the less verbiage the better.'

27 'Art', he wrote in the same letter, was 'produced by human hands', but was 'not wrought by the hands alone' but welled up 'from a deeper source in our soul'.
28 'Peindre de chic' was a term current in artists' studios for 'painting from the imagination, not from life' (*Trésor de la langue française*), and Van Gogh attached a negative connotation to it. See, for example, letter 409, and Rummens 1994, p. 34, who referred to the recollections of Van Gogh's pupils from Nuenen, Willem van de Wakker and Dimmen Gestel, who recalled that he had accused them of making 'a chichi' (Brieven 1952, vol. 3, nos. 435d and 435e: 'een chickie').

Nature versus the imagination

Given these strong views on technique it is not surprising that Van Gogh preferred self-tuition to tuition. 'In a sense I'm glad that I've never *learned* how to paint', as he wrote in The Hague in 1882. That way he would remain uncontaminated by 'a tame or conventional language which doesn't stem from nature itself but from a studied manner or a system' [260].[29] Or as he put it in the spring of 1883, ringing the changes on a poem by P.A. de Génestet: 'Not in the studio have I found it. And from the painters, the connoisseurs, oh, little learned' [439].[30] This did not mean that 'friction', to use his own word, with other artists was undesirable, but that he did think that a minimum of technical knowledge would suffice, and that learning by direct imitation was utterly wrong, was even a threat to an artist's own authenticity.

The overriding idea at that time was his belief that he could learn a great deal, if not everything, by studying nature, by discovering how the illusion of reality could be achieved on a flat surface. This is very clear, for instance, from his attempts to master the art of perspective from 1882 onwards. He did not set himself any specific exercises, but believed that practice would make perfect. He did so by using a perspective frame, although in his view it was only useful if one already had a 'feeling' for perspective [254].[31] He considered that 'feeling things themselves, reality, is more important than feeling paintings, at least more productive and life-giving' [249], thereby rejecting the idea that he could derive much benefit at that moment from studying the art of his predecessors.[32] He categorically stated that 'it isn't the language of painters one ought to listen to but the language of nature' [249].

This belief in the power and wisdom of his own eyes is typical of an autodidact, and it fits in with the demands being made of *plein-air* painting at the time, but it obscures an essential part of the artistic process, which is that an artist does not so much follow nature as re-create reality, and the very first prerequisite for that is a good understanding of the autonomous effects of the elements of art.[33] Van Gogh was only partly aware of the full scale of this simple law, as shown by his progress in painting.

He first worked in oils at the end of 1881, but only started painting seriously in early 1884, when he was living with his parents in Nuenen. Deprived of painted examples and contact with artists (apart from his friend Anthon van Rappard, who came to visit him in Brabant on several occasions), he wrestled with colour, tone and chiaroscuro.[34] His knowledge of them was based on what he had heard from painters during his time in The Hague and some writings about Old Master art with an unusual emphasis on technique, such as Eugène Fromentin's *Les maîtres d'autrefois* of 1876, Charles Blanc's *Les artistes de mon temps* of the same year, and his *Grammaire des arts du dessin* of 1867. Blanc's books also taught Van Gogh about the modern, scientific theory of colour and its applications by Eugène Delacroix.[35]

Armed with this knowledge he hoped to achieve as much with oils as he had in the past with the pen and the carpenter's pencil. He was still searching for an honest depiction of nature that was as direct as possible, and for a powerful, unpolished expression – his model being not so much Delacroix as Jules Dupré (fig. 6), who had achieved 'something of a magnificent symphony in the colour, *carried through, intended, manly*' [450]. True to his love of the School of Barbizon, he also aimed for a pronounced and above all dark palette, as well as for a harmony of tone as pre-

29 Van Gogh did choose the academic route initially, enrolling in the Brussels academy in 1880; see Van Heugten 1996, pp. 15-17, and Brussels 1987, pp. 240, 241, 396, 478. Shortly afterwards he turned his back on all forms of academic training, as we know mainly from his correspondence with Anthon van Rappard, possibly because of a lack of encouragement there.

30 De Génestet had written in his poem 'Waar en hoe': 'Niet in de scholen, neen, heb ik gevonden, / En van geleerden, och, weinig geleerd' ('Where and how', 'Not in the books have I found it / And from the 'learned' – oh, little learned'); see letter 439, note 15.

31 For Van Gogh's use of the perspective frame see Van Heugten 1996, pp. 19-25, and pp. 117-28.

32 Van Gogh preceded this passage by saying that 'I can now understand, better than six months ago or more, why Mauve said: don't talk to me about Dupré, talk to me instead about the side of that ditch, or something like that. It sounds crude and yet it's perfectly correct'.

33 The classic study on this subject is still Gombrich 1972.

34 The following is based on the old but still excellent article Derkert 1946, and on Van Uitert 1966 and Dorn 1996. Van Gogh had received practical tips at the end of his Hague period from Herman van der Weele, with whom he repainted several works (letter 380), although it is not known which ones.

35 Blanc 1867, pp. 594-610. For an explanation of his views and book see Song 1981, pp. 116-29. Van Gogh's high regard for Delacroix is discussed in Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 64-74.



6 Jules Dupré, *Evening*, c. 1875-80. The Hague, The Mesdag Collection.

scribed by the artists of the Hague School. However, those two objectives are irreconcilable, and at first he barely realised it. In theory, perhaps, he recognised the differences between a colourist and a tonalist, between Delacroix and someone like Mauve or Jozef Israëls for example, but not in practice.[36]

He tried to master the effects of colours as he worked, and he learned a surprising amount in the space of two years. During his time in The Hague he had thought it would be enough to render and thus analyse the local colour.[37] At the beginning of 1884 he realised that matters were more complicated than that when he saw that he should not take the local colours as his basis but needed to translate them. The important thing was what the colours did on the actual canvas.[38] He took the next logical step in October 1885, when he realised that only imagination could help in the search for '*that general effect of looking beautiful* against one another that tones have in nature' [537].

Van Gogh devoted almost an entire letter to an explanation of this new insight, as if he had to convince not only Theo but himself of its truth. An artist '*creates*, but doesn't hold a *mirror* up to things, creates them *amazingly*, but *creates, poetizes*. That's why it's so good'.[39] He repeated this idea in different formulations: 'I study nature so as not to do anything silly, to remain reasonable – but – I don't really care whether my colours are precisely the same, so long as they look good on my canvas'. He thus came to the conclusion that the palette had an importance all of its own as an element of art: 'COLOUR EXPRESSES SOMETHING IN ITSELF. [...] What looks beautiful, really beautiful – is also right'.

These insights cannot be seen in isolation from the paintings he had just made, in which the palette was 'thawing' [537]. This did not so much mean that he had sworn off painting with dark colours but that he was learning how to master colour as an autonomous visual device and consequently now dared to try out higher spectra. His *Still life with Bible* (fig. 7) still consisted largely of dark tints with just one bright note, but there is far more colour in his *Avenue of poplars* (fig. 8).[40] He explained to Theo: 'the bleakness of the earliest beginnings has gone. I still often run up against a blank wall when undertaking something, but all the same, the colours follow one another as if of their own accord, and taking a colour as the starting-point I see clearly in my mind's eye what derives from it, and how one can get

36 This dichotomy in the concept of colourism was due to Corot, whose work could not in any way be compared with that of the traditional colourists. 'The old contrast between line and colour was to make way for the antithesis of colour and tone, which did not give rise to a separate term in critical writings, because that contrast was no longer regarded as relevant for Impressionism' ('De oude tegenstelling lijn-kleur zal plaats gaan maken voor de antithese kleur-toon, die in de critiek niet uitkristalliseerde tot een afzonderlijke term, omdat voor het impressionisme deze tegenstelling niet langer relevant zou zijn'), as noted by Van Uitert 1966, p. 107. Van Gogh explained his understanding of this difference in letter 449. For his 'misconceptions' regarding the use of colour see Van Heugten 2003, pp. 127-32.
37 'The colourist is he who on seeing a colour in nature is able to analyze it coolly and say, for example, that green-grey is yellow with black and almost no blue, &c. In short, knowing how to make up the greys of nature on the palette' [252].
38 Or as he put it in letter 449: 'to my mind one shouldn't consider the colours in a painting in isolation – if, for instance, a snot colour is placed against strong tones of brownish red, of dark blue or of olive green – can express the very tender and fresh green of a meadow or a little wheatfield'.
39 By his own account, Van Gogh had only 'created' in his *Potato eaters* (fig. 3), which he supposedly painted from memory (see letter 496).
40 He had probably just started on the painting. In his letter, anyway, he spoke of 'an autumn landscape, trees with yellow leaves' [537]. Andries Bonger later maintained that Van Gogh had retouched this painting in Paris, which led to the suggestion that the pronounced, brighter palette dated from that period (for this question see Tellegen 1967, p. 12). However, scientific examination has shown that the retouching was restricted to a few corrections and the signature (Van der Werf 1991, pp. 7, 20-23).



7 *Still life with Bible* (F 117 JH 946), 1885. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

life into it' [537]. It was only now that he fully understood that colourism, making colours 'look beautiful', meant departing far more from reality than when one used a low, dark palette (or when striving for unity in chiaroscuro), which explains his lavish praise for poetising and creation in the artistic process. This was an important insight, and marked his birth as a true colourist. When, in Arles, he thought that he could make a contribution to modern art through the medium of colour, he believed that it was based above all on what he had learned in Holland, 'before I knew the Impressionists' [663]. That lesson was: 'instead of trying to render exactly what I have before my eyes, I use colour more arbitrarily in order to express myself forcefully'. He realised full well that these views about the independence of colour ran counter to his ideas from the early part of his career.[41]

Virtuosity was now justified as a goal. Some people, as he wrote in the same letter from Nuenen in 1885, would regard his present and unconditional faith in colours 'looking good' as 'a dangerous tendency towards Romanticism, a betrayal of "realism"', 'painting from the imagination' [537], which was of course a reference to his own, earlier standpoint.[42] In 1884, after all, he had been a '*speaker of truth*' rigorously condemning the use of '*oratorical chic*' [439], but if the harmonising of colours entailed 'having a greater love for the colourist's palette than for nature, well then, so be it. Delacroix, Millet, Corot, Dupré, Daubigny, Breton, 30 more names, do they not form the heart of this century where art is concerned, and all of them, do they not have *their roots* in romanticism, *even if they surpassed romanticism?*' [537].

This realisation of what is necessary for colours to come into their own on canvas enabled Van Gogh to get a better idea of his place among the predecessors he so admired. He remained true to the Realists' repertoire but now deliberately set out to enrich it with colourfulness and the virtuosity of the Romantics. He abandoned the tonalism of Mauve and others as the benchmark, and from then on felt far

41 Van Gogh's formulation of this new standpoint was probably strengthened by his recent reading of Felix Bracquemond's *Du dessin et de la couleur,* Paris 1885, in which the key proposition is that a work of art is distinguished from nature by stylisation. He called this 'the ornamental principle', and considered colour to be part of it. See, for example, p. 188: '[...] it is ornament alone that gives a copy after nature that which makes it a work of art' ('[...] l'ornement seul fournit à la copie de la nature ce qui en fait une oeuvre d'art'). For Bracquemond's views see Rummens 1991, pp. 44, 45. Van Gogh was so fascinated by Bracquemond's book that he re-read it in Antwerp (letters 526, 530, 531 and 564).
42 The prevailing view was that in their reaction to the Neo-Classicists the Romantics had lost themselves in 'prodigies of the brush, the bold impasto of Rembrandt, the tones of Rubens, sunshine, chiaroscuro', in brief, in 'marvels of execution' ('[...] des prodiges de la brosse, des empâtement fiers de Rembrandt, des tons de Rubens, du soleil, du clair-obscur, [...] les merveilles de l'exécution'); quotations from Blanc 1865, vol. 3, 'Ary Scheffer', p. 3. Blanc's views on the Romantics are explained in Flax 1989, p. 96.

closer to Delacroix and, above all, Dupré again, whose landscapes were considered to belong to both movements.[43] Although this positioning was due to his need to be modern in Parisian terms, it shows that he was still far removed from the modern, contemporary striving for luminosity.

His artistic views had by now undergone a fundamental change. His new conviction that colour itself had an expressive power and, moreover, that there was nothing basically wrong with 'distinction of technique', was at odds with his old view that the message of social commitment was the highest goal when assessing a work of art. Initially he had been most strongly attracted to artists 'in whom I see the soul most at work', because he saw 'something more' in their work, 'something very different from the masterly rendering of fabrics, something very different from the light and shade, something very different from the colour' [332], but from the end of his period in Nuenen he developed a taste for painters who, in his view, did not possess that soul. During his stay in Antwerp, for instance, he developed a greater appreciation for the qualities of Rubens, who 'in his expressions, particularly in the men [...] is superficial, hollow, bombastic, yes, altogether conventional and nothing, like – Giulio Romano and even worse fellows of the decadence. But all the same, I adore it because it is precisely he, Rubens, who seeks to express a mood of gaiety, of serenity, of sorrow, and actually achieves it, *through the combination of colours*' (emphasis added) [552]. To put it another way, Van Gogh felt that he was becoming more and more of a colourist than a Realist, or an artist who creates and makes poetry with colour, to use his own words, and that also emerges from the argument with which he now rejected academic painting. He had previously condemned it for its choice of subjects, which he considered wrong-headed, but during his time in Antwerp he came to the damning conclusion that Delaroche, Scheffer, Dubufe and Gérôme were 'so little *painters*' [551].[44]

New elements of art

Van Gogh's late acknowledgement of the independent role of the elements of art did not mean that he regarded his self-tuition from nature as being rather pointless. In his view he would not have gained a real understanding of those elements if he had chosen another path. 'Making studies from nature, wrestling with reality – I don't want to argue it away. I've tackled it that way myself for years and years, almost fruitlessly and with all sorts of sad results. I wouldn't want to have missed that – *error*. [...] One begins by fruitlessly working oneself to death to follow nature, and everything is contrary. One ends by quietly creating from one's palette, and nature is in accord with it, follows from it' [537].

Van Gogh now understood that if he was to make progress he would gain more from the study of art itself than from his own observations of nature. Back at the beginning of his career in 1882 he had asserted that 'it isn't the language of painters one ought to listen to but the language of nature' [249], but now he stated emphatically that 'I'm sure my work will benefit in the long run if I see more paintings – because when I see a painting I can work out what it's done with' [533]. His new faith in making progress by studying art was also conditioned by his idea that in contrast to the early years of his career he no longer need fear a loss of authenticity. 'Because I've worked entirely alone for years, I imagine that although I will and

43 Or as Van Gogh wrote in the same letter: 'I've always idolized Jules Dupré, and he'll become even more recognized than he is now. For he's a real colourist – always interesting, and with something so powerful and dramatic. Yes, he is indeed a brother to Delacroix'. Dupré's reputation has not yet been studied in detail, but see Rosenthal 1987, pp. 275, 276, 292. Van Gogh's new standpoint is typified by the fact that after visiting the Museum Fodor in Amsterdam he heaped praise on Jozef Israëls's *Zandvoort Fisherman* (Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum) (also known as *The way past the graveyard*; see letters 534-37, 539). The colour scheme of this early painting, which is dated 1856, was inspired by that of the French Romantics, and is in marked contrast to Israëls's later work, which is so much darker and more tonal. Van Gogh's appreciation of it is entirely understandable in the light of his changed taste, and is in no way a 'false trail', as Van Heugten called it (Van Heugten 2003, p. 128).

44 During his Hague period he had written that this movement was not 'entirely correct and true' [336], which shows that his aesthetic norm was still a moral one at the time.



8 *Avenue of poplars* (F 45 JH 959), 1885. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen.



9 Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Jewish bride*, c. 1654. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

although I can learn from others and even adopt technical things – all the same I'll always see through *my own* eyes and tackle things originally. However, nothing could be surer than that I'll try to learn more things' [542].

As a result of this new, acutely felt need to measure and compare himself against the tradition of painting, he was now open to the idea of studying technique and form in the work of other artists, as he never had been before. This already manifested itself during his trip to Amsterdam in early October 1885, when he visited the newly opened Rijksmuseum and the Museum Fodor. He was excited by *The meagre company* of 1637 by Frans Hals and Pieter Codde (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum), which led him to call Hals 'a colourist among the colourists, a colourist like Veronese, like Rubens, like Delacroix, like Velázquez' [536], but understood that



10 *Autumn landscape* (F 44 JH 962), 1885. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.

that was an unsuitable term for his other works, and also for Rembrandt, whom he considered more of a 'harmonist' [536]. Here he was following in the footsteps of Fromentin, who had called Rembrandt a 'luminarist' in order to distinguish him from the traditional colourists.[45] Van Gogh also realised that Hals and Rembrandt also differed fundamentally from Rubens and Diaz, whose work in the Museum Fodor testified to a purer colouristic approach.[46]

It was in this way that he broadened his feeling for views about colour, but at the same time he learned a good deal about brushwork. He noted with obvious relief that 'what particularly struck me when I saw the old Dutch paintings again is that they *were usually painted quickly*. That these great masters like Hals, Rembrandt, Ruisdael – so many others – as far as possible just put it straight down – and didn't come back to it so very much. And – this, too, please – *that if it worked, they left it alone*' [535]. He saw 'that the true painters didn't finish in the sense in which people all too often used finish – that's to say clear if one stands with one's nose pressed to it. The best paintings – precisely the most perfect from a technical point of view – seen from close to are touches of colour next to one another, and create their effect at a certain distance. Rembrandt persisted in this despite all the trouble he had to suffer as a result' [539], and here he would have been thinking particularly of *The Jewish bride* (fig. 9).[47] Back in Nuenen, with the works by Hals and Rembrandt still fresh in his mind, he employed these new insights in attempts to produce mature works. He practised *alla prima* painting in *Still life with Bible* (fig. 7), which he completed '*in one go*, in a single day' [537]. In the past he would have called the coarse, almost wild brushstrokes at lower right '*oratorical chic*', but they show that he was no longer ashamed of a display of virtuosity. Bravura in colour rather than touch was the main purpose of *Avenue of poplars* (fig. 8), which is on a ground with a grey mid-tone. He followed the example of Rembrandt's *Jewish bride* (fig. 9) by allowing the touches of colour to flourish on their own, while ensuring that they retained

45 Fromentin 1948, pp. 201, 202. See also Letters 2009, letter 536, note 18.
46 Van Gogh was referring to Peter Paul Rubens's *Christ carrying the Cross*, which is now in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, and Diaz de la Peña's *A nymph with cupids*, now in the Amsterdam Museum. See letter 535, note 9.
47 For this painting, Rembrandt's colourism and the traditional *alla prima* method of painting see Van de Wetering 1991, pp. 12-39, which is also included in a slightly modified form in Van de Wetering 1997, pp. 154-90.



11 *Woman with a scarlet bow in her hair* (F 207 JH 979), 1885. Private collection.

12 Detail of Peter Paul Rubens, *Teresa of Avila*, c. 1630. Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten.

13 *Portrait of a prostitute* (cat. 47).





'their effect at a certain distance' [539].[48] He painted the foliage with loose, quite arbitrarily modelled touches of colour which look completely abstract from close up but which are recognisable as leaves when seen at a distance.

The colour contrast in *Avenue of poplars* is sharper than in the *Autumn landscape* from the same period (fig. 10), which is probably why Van Gogh regarded the latter far more as the fruit of the time he spent 'making studies from nature, wrestling with reality' in the preceding years.[49] *Still life with Bible* and *Avenue of poplars*, on the other hand, represented his recent, more ambitious aim of 'quietly creating from one's palette', when bravura of colour and touch were more important than the correct form. He ultimately found that more important, and it is significant that he left *Autumn landscape* behind in the Netherlands and took the other two works with

48 For the history of this technique see Van de Wetering 1997 and Gombrich 1972, pp. 155-69.
49 In letter 539 Van Gogh says that he painted *Autumn landscape* in four sessions.



14 Edouard Manet, *Peonies in a vase*, 1864. Paris, Musée d'Orsay.



15 *Still life with peonies* (F 249 JH 1105), 1886. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.

him to Antwerp, where he did not just want to show them to dealers but could also use them as study material.[50]

His future lay in developing the *alla prima* technique, and he immediately started doing so in his portraits when he arrived in Antwerp (fig. 11; cats. 45-48), hoping to profit from the example of Rubens, above all. He followed in the Flemish master's footsteps by working up his very first portrait there from a lively mid-tone (cat. 45), but it soon turned out that in this genre his own approach, which was so much more direct, was difficult to reconcile with the traditional, carefully built-up structure employed by Rubens.[51] Van Gogh's palette did become blonder thanks to Rubens (figs. 12, 13), but as a colourist he was still a neophyte, in a sense. By now he could do more than just have colour stand out against a dark background (compare fig. 13 with fig. 11), but his skills were still limited.

Given his slender knowledge of and ideas about colouristic paintings it is perfectly understandable that he was disappointed with the Impressionists' achievements when he first saw their work in Paris. His initial reaction was that it was 'ugly, badly painted, badly drawn, bad in colour, everything that's miserable' [626], to quote just part of his criticism. The Impressionists no longer used the brushstroke and colour as an aid to reading forms. In their sketchy works, the 'reading of brushstrokes' was replaced by 'a reading *across* brushstrokes' (cf. fig. 2), as Gombrich so neatly put it.[52] Van Gogh, though, was not far enough advanced to be able to appreciate that. Even though he believed that strokes of colour could be used independently they still had to contribute to the illusionistic effect. In that respect his views were still traditional, and it is significant that during his early months in Paris he was only enthusiastic about Manet's early *Peonies in a vase* of 1864 (fig. 14).[53] Executed on a dark ground, it had more in common with his own colouristic taste, which was heavily influenced by 17th-century Dutch art. It was not long after he had seen it at an auction in June 1886 that he attempted to paint a flower piece in roughly the same manner (fig. 15).[54]

50 See note 18. Van Gogh gave *Autumn landscape* to his acquaintance Anton Kerssemakers; see letter 539.
51 Although Van Gogh, like many of his artist contemporaries, thought that he was following in the footsteps of such illustrious predecessors, there is a world of difference between the 19th and 17th-century methods. However, it has barely been studied yet, although an initial reconnaissance will be found in Van de Wetering 1997, pp. 133-52. For the 19th-century *au premier coup* see Callen 2000, pp. 157-61.
52 Gombrich 1972, p. 169.
53 Van Gogh praised this work when he started painting sunflowers in Arles. 'As much in harmony and as much a *flower* as anything you like, and yet painted in solid, thick impasto and not like Jeannin. That's what I'd call simplicity of technique' [668; repeated in a different form in 669].
54 Sale cat. *Collection M. John Saulnier de Bordeaux. Tableaux modernes de premier ordre,* Paris (Hôtel Drouot), 5 June 1886, viewing days 2 and 4 June, no. 62.

However, Van Gogh then opened his mind surprisingly quickly to artistic developments considered to have been introduced by Manet. By experimenting and looking around at every form of contemporary art he soon had a thorough grasp of the wide variety of conceptions of form which, to quote the apt words of the critic and painter Eugène Fromentin, 'prove the immense elasticity of the art of painting, and the astonishing freedom as to the form genius may take without changing its aim'.[55] His art became more varied in both colour and brushwork amazingly quickly in the summer of 1886 thanks to the heavily impasted and colourful oeuvre of Monticelli (figs. 19, 20), although his own work was still far removed from that of the Impressionists, as he was well aware. 'Since I saw the impressionists,' he wrote around November 1886 to his friend Horace Mann Livens, 'I assure you that neither your colour nor mine as it is developping [sic] itself, is *exactly* the same as their theories' [569]. This began to change in early 1887 when he learned to work delicately instead of roughly, under the influence of Pointillism and painting *à l'essence* (figs. 22, 23). His brushwork became more draughtsman-like, and his paintings became "abstracter" than they had been. At almost the same time, for example, he began using the support as an element, and both developments show that 'reading across brushstrokes' had become more important to him.

His acceptance of the idea that a visual idiom could be less descriptive than he had thought when he left Nuenen would undoubtedly have been smoothed by the fact that even in his Dutch period he had not seen a striving for illusion as the main objective. The most important thing was the expression of his own temperament, with mistakes or vagueness being justified provided the work had 'a certain life and *raison d'être* that will overwhelm those faults' [528]. Now whether this should be seen as a defence of ignorance or as a deliberate glorification of errors,[56] it certainly meant that ambiguous forms were not necessarily an obstacle to appreciating or reading a scene, and it can only be the case that Van Gogh found support for this view in modern French painting. At the end of his time in Paris his old idea that the artist's temperament must inform his or her art merged seamlessly with the resistance to '*trompe-l'oeil* realism' organised by the Parisian avant-garde [673]. A painting should not be a photograph; the artist had to concern himself with style, and that should not be put at the service of illusion. 'To see a style and not an object. To highlight the abstract sense and not the objective', as his friend Emile Bernard wrote.[57] Van Gogh borrowed this objective from the new generation, but initially applied it mainly to colour. The painting of the future would be 'more music and less sculpture', to quote something he wrote in Arles [669].

In practice this meant that a tree or a building could now be blue, for example, if the palette so dictated, and also that a brushstroke no longer needed to be so descriptive, not even from a distance. However, Van Gogh did feel that there was a limit to this new artistic licence. The overall effect had to remain connected to reality. As he put it in 1888: 'I exaggerate, I sometimes make changes to the subject, but still I don't invent the whole of the painting; on the contrary, I find it ready-made – but to be untangled – in the real world' [698].[58] Or as he had written at the end of his time in Nuenen, when he was still content with the very lowest degree of abstraction in colour: one should not 'do anything silly' but 'remain reasonable' [537].

55 Fromentin 1948, p. 192.

56 After the criticism of the figures in his ambitious *Potato eaters* Van Gogh had taken this idea of his work's 'life and *raison d'être*' to extremes. In the summer of 1885 he wrote: '*I would be desperate if my figures were* GOOD'. In fact, he did not even want them to be 'academically correct' [515].

57 Emile Bernard, 'Mémoire pour l'histoire du symbolisme pictural de 1890', 1909, in Bernard 1994, vol. 1, p. 201: 'Voir le style et non pas l'objet. Dégager le sens abstrait et non l'objectif'. Van Gogh adopted this quest for 'style'; see letters 689 and 705.

58 Van Gogh continued: 'Later, after another ten years of studies, all right, but in very truth I have so much curiosity for what's possible and what really exists that I have so little desire or courage to search for the ideal, in so far as it could result from *my* abstract studies'.

In the course of his long journey, Van Gogh's earlier need to attest to an 'honest human feeling' in his paintings had become subordinated to his desire to be convincing as an artist using just the elements of art. His humanitarian idealism was no longer enough on its own. In the past he had 'considered art more sacred, more than now', he coolly noted at the end of 1887 [574]. This, though, did not mean that his original social commitment had evaporated, nor that he had lost his interest in seasonal work on the land, although they were not as keen as they had once been.

His love of the work of peasants resurfaced in Arles, where he got his first chance to concentrate on country life since leaving Nuenen, but he no longer felt the need to restrict himself to one message and one subject. The value of art, he now understood, did not lie in the subject. He now found it far easier to switch from one subject to another, and from one painterly standpoint to another, although he did realise that one style suited him better than the next. Even more to the point, his answer to the search for new ways of advancing modern art turned out to be the pursuit of a diversity of style, even within a single genre. In 1888, for example, he depicted orchards and harvests, whereupon he assured Theo that he would paint the same subjects again the following year, 'but – with a different colour and above all, altered execution. And that will still continue, these changes and these variations' [686].

In contrast to what may have been suggested above, this development was not linear, nor was it always logical. Its complexity is spelled out in more detail below, split into the three key phases after his departure from Nuenen: first his exploitation of new genres after abandoning peasant painting at the end of 1885, secondly his introduction to modernism in the winter of 1886-87, and thirdly his quest for stylisation and abstraction in the autumn of 1887.

Leaving peasant painting behind: new genres

We know from the letters just how eager Van Gogh was to see his work on sale in Antwerp. 'This much is certain, I want to be seen,' he wrote shortly after arriving in the city [546]. He had already declared that he was prepared to tackle literally everything in order to sell. 'Be it landscapes, be it townscapes, be it portraits, [...] – or – even if it were signboards and decoration' [542]. He also thought of making still lifes for 'the cafés, the restaurants, the cafés chantants' [547].[59] This need for publicity and instant financial gain immediately led to a degree of professionalisation. For the first time he bought ready-made canvases, new brushes and more expensive pigments (see cats. 47, 48), and that coincided with his decision to do something about his long-neglected appearance.[60] However strange it may sound, this was all a concession to commerce.

Although he was prepared to try anything, in practice he was pinning his hopes on portraiture (cats. 45-48), with which, unlike landscapes and townscapes, let alone signboards and decoration, he could salve his artistic conscience to some extent, since it was the genre that was closest to figure painting.[61] He was unsuccessful, however. He received no commissions, and in addition 'I still haven't got enough models' in order to practise the genre [550]. As a result of this fiasco he toyed with the idea of gaining more experience in what he considered his greatest shortcoming: drawing and painting the human figure, especially the nude. He

59 Van Gogh was prepared to put his art at the service of others, and even thought of painting 'a sort of shop sign [...]. I mean, for instance, still lifes of fish for a fishmonger, for flowers, for vegetables, for a restaurant' [546].
60 See letters 557, 559 and 574, among others.
61 He also made a few views of the city and its parks, all of which are lost apart from cat. 49, unless he painted over them. For these works see cat. 49, note 1.

wanted to follow lessons in an artist's studio, but instead enrolled in the academy because it was cheaper.[62] At the end of January he was given a place on the painting course, and when that finished at the beginning of February he began drawing from plaster casts.[63]

This was a remarkable decision, for at the beginning of his career he had ridiculed the conservative bastion of the academy. The fact that he now overcame his old objection with such ease says something not only about the belief in his own authenticity, as mentioned above, but also about his new openness to everything that might possibly be of artistic benefit to him (and of course reflected his firm conviction that drawing was the basis of painting). Before deciding to move to Antwerp he mocked the '*plaster statue copiers*' and thought that 'they wouldn't want me at the academy, nor probably would I' [526, 541], but now he only saw opportunities to expand his skills.

He hoped not only to learn more about the proportions of the human body but also to master 'modelling by drawing directly with a brush', which would enable him to conceive figure painting 'totally differently from Bouguereau and others, who lack interior modelling, are *flat*', as he wrote optimistically at the beginning of the drawing course [555].[64] His need to concentrate so much on the volumes of the bodies was brought about by his self-taught, brash style of drawing figures, which was the opposite of what was taught at the academy.[65] He continued to cherish 'solid modelling' during his time in Cormon's studio in Paris [558], where he went to study almost immediately after finishing the courses in Antwerp at the end of February 1886, and where he was again forced to make conventional, academic drawings. There, as in the Antwerp academy, more emphasis was placed on the contour than the mass, in the painting class as well.[66] He was taught the traditional *ébauche* (see cat. 51), in which the volumes of figures are created by painstakingly and gradually building up light and dark passages, and he tried this technique out in several small, unusual portraits painted outside Cormon's studio (cats. 52-54).

Although Van Gogh originally thought that he would spend three years with Cormon he left after three months, in June 1886, greatly disappointed.[67] He had conformed to standard academic practice, but it turned out that his secret hope of learning how to model 'by drawing directly with a brush' was a vain one [555]. As before, self-tuition was the only alternative, and he began by painting plaster casts, exploring in paint the possibilities, and impossibilities, of his own views on modelling (cats. 57-63). These were unusual, perverse exercises, but later generations failed to recognise that. Ironically enough, these studies were thought to have been painted in Cormon's studio because of the subjects – classical statues.

In early June, after leaving Cormon, Van Gogh wanted to carry on painting figures, but a lack of money and thus models made that impossible.[68] In a way this brought him back to the position he was in on his arrival in Antwerp, when earning money was his main priority, and that was now his goal once again. Since his old idea of getting portrait commissions had proved unrealistic, he concentrated on the other three genres that had been economically attractive: landscapes, townscapes and still lifes.[69]

In the summer of 1886 he made studies for an ambitious view of the popular hill of Montmartre (cats. 64, 65) and worked on a carefully planned panorama of Paris

62 On this see letter 541.
63 Van Gogh's activities at the Antwerp academy and in the city's drawing clubs are described in Van Heugten 2001, pp. 13-16.
64 Letter 526, which had been written in September 1885, shows just how quickly he could change his mind. In it he asserted precisely the opposite when speaking of the 'SPLENDID *truth*' of plastic modelling: 'But – – – does one learn it from the *plaster statue copiers* and at the *art academy*? I believe: *not*. *If* they taught like *that*, I'd be happy to enthuse about the academy, but I know only too well that this *isn't* the case'.
65 Van Gogh had been criticised for the 'flatness' of his figures in his Nuenen period, and tried to correct that by suggesting plasticity in the volumes by drawing ovals and circles. He did this after reading Jean Gigoux, *Causeries sur les artistes de mon temps*, Paris 1885, in which that method of drawing was explained (see Drawings 2, p. 26, and cat. 162, pp. 192-95).
66 Drawings 3, cat. 218, pp. 63-70, cats. 238-71, pp. 112-72.
67 See letter 569 and Van Tilborgh 2007.
68 He had not 'had the opportunity to find models', as he wrote to his sister Willemien a year later [574].
69 Although he would have had little trouble in finding rural subjects near Paris, he continued to ignore his earlier peasant repertoire. The only exceptions are *Wheatfield with partridge* (cat. 110) and *Wheatfield with poppies* (F 562 JH 1483; for the dating of which see p. 49, note 32).



16 *Moulin de la Galette* (F 227 JH 1170), 1886. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.



17 Stanislas Lépine, *Montmartre: rue Saint-Vincent*, 1870s. Paris, Musée d'Orsay.

seen from the same hill (cat. 66). He also painted his first views of the entertainment centre at the top of the hill, especially impasse des Deux Frères, probably in the hope of exhibiting them in the dance hall or restaurant of the Moulin de la Galette (fig. 16).[70] However, alongside this kind of portrait of rural Montmartre in the tradition of Stanislas Lépine (fig. 17), Emile Michel and Antoine Vollon, his main interest that summer was in the commercially attractive genre of the flower still life (see cats. 67-71).[71] He painted around 35 of them, but artistic considerations soon outweighed economic ones. He later referred to them as being merely 'colour studies' [569].[72]

Some authors have associated Van Gogh's need to do this specific exercise so intensively and for so long (more than two months) with the eighth, so-called Impressionist exhibition, which was held from 15 May to 15 June 1886, where he was confronted with the colourful achievements of the Parisian avant-garde of the day.[73] However, it is doubtful whether this did in fact influence him. 'And when they see them [the Impressionists] for the first time they're bitterly, bitterly disappointed and find them careless, ugly, badly painted, badly drawn, bad in colour, everything that's miserable', he wrote to his sister Willemien [626].[74] Admittedly, that confession dates from a year later, but there is good reason to assume that he was indeed not immediately enamoured of the Impressionists. We know that he admired Monet from the letter that he wrote to Livens in the autumn of 1886, but again, as mentioned above, he also told his colleague that his own work did not entirely conform to the principles of the new movement.[75]

Van Gogh's flower pieces were the logical outcome of the plan to paint more colourfully and loosely that he had adopted in Nuenen. He had benefited greatly from Rubens's example during his stay in Antwerp (see cats. 46-48), but there had been no new opportunities to make poetry with colour during his studies at the academy there or later in Cormon's studio in Paris (see cats. 50, 51). In early June

70 Van Gogh continued the series, which was almost certainly intended to be programmatic, in 1887; see cat. 92.

71 The flower still life was a very unfamiliar genre to Van Gogh. He had made only two in Nuenen, F 197 JH 1167 and F 282 JH 1165, unless one also counts F 104 JH 923 and F 198 JH 1125, in which the ginger jar seems to be more important than the flowers. For the dating of these works see p. 41, note 18.

72 More flower still lifes are listed in Hulsker 1996, but the dating of some of them is incorrect and the attribution of others disputed. On this see p. 41, note 18.

73 Encouraged by the example of the Impressionists he tried to put 'more and stronger color effects' into his still lifes, according to Hulsker 1990, p. 233. Van Gogh described the exercises in his customary terms, which were borrowed mainly from Blanc's writings: 'I have made a series of colour studies in painting simply flowers, red poppies, blue corn flowers and myosotys, white and rose roses, yellow chrysantemums [sic] – Seeking oppositions of blue with orange, red & green, yellow and violet, seeking LES TONS ROMPUS ET NEUTRES to harmonise brutal extremes. Trying to render intense COLOUR and not a GREY harmony' [569].

74 He continued: 'That was my first impression, too, when I came to Paris with the ideas of Mauve and Israëls and other clever painters'.

75 Letter 569. He told Livens in the same letter that he admired not only Monet's landscapes but also Degas's nudes, and in both cases this seems to have been due to Theo's taste.



18 Eugène Delacroix, *Christ asleep during the tempest*, c. 1853. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

1886, however, he saw Manet's *Peonies in a vase* (fig. 14) and Delacroix's *Christ asleep during the tempest* (fig. 18) in the Drouot auction rooms in Paris,[76] and it very much seems that both works acted as catalysts for his decision to start experimenting once again with heightened colour and free brushwork.[77]

Monticelli and the shock of recognition

Delacroix ceased being a direct example soon afterwards and was replaced by Adolphe Monticelli (fig. 19). It was probably at the end of June 1886 that Van Gogh first saw a lot of paintings by this colourist, who was largely ignored at the time, and recognised in him an artistic descendant of Delacroix.[78] Monticelli's paintings were executed with much more paint than Delacroix's and are rougher, and Van Gogh evidently found that very attractive. They were 'beautiful, like barbotines', as he later put it,[79] and as such they fitted in well with his old ideal of unpolished, 'manly' art. In the early years of his career he had seen his preference for a rough style resembling 'an etching with no burr' confirmed by the robust engravings in *The Graphic* [217], but after he exchanged chalk and pencil for paint and opted for colour above tone at the end of 1885, he had found no truly suitable painterly equivalent. The artists he cited as examples in this period were either not out-and-out colourists (Rembrandt, Dupré) or employed more traditional, considered brushwork (Delacroix, Rubens), as a result of which he would never have recognised himself fully in their work.

Lacking a clear model for a rough, colouristic style, Van Gogh had long been uncertain about the course of his own work. In 1885, for example, he found his thick brushwork rather problematic. Speaking of his *Autumn landscape* (fig. 10), he said that he wanted 'to work even more vigorously with rather less paint' [539]. It was around now that Theo actually received the decidedly odd advice to trim off the 'smaller or larger protrusions of paint' with a razor blade after a while [538], and this distrust of impasted brushwork only disappeared after Van Gogh had embraced Monticelli as his guiding light (fig. 20). Needless to say, Monticelli, with his still lifes and *fêtes galantes*, was not one of the '*speakers of truth*' whom he had initially

76 Sale cat. *Collection M. John Saulnier de Bordeaux. Tableaux modernes de premier ordre,* Paris (Hôtel Drouot), 5 June 1886, viewing days 2 and 4 June, no. 35 (with an illustration on the second unnumbered page following).
77 A year later he went so far as to call this painting by Delacroix, with its locally garish colours, the French master's colouristic masterpiece with which he wanted to vie (letters 632 and 634). A different explanation is given in Van Heugten 2003, pp. 127-31. See note 53 above for Van Gogh's appreciation of Manet's still life.
78 This observation is not based on any documentary evidence but on the fact that Monticelli's influence is very apparent in all the flower still lifes (see cats. 69-71) apart from the first two (cats. 67, 68). Monticelli died on 28 June 1886. Van Gogh probably got to know his work in the gallery of the Paris art dealer Joseph Delarebeyrette at 43 rue de Provence, who had almost 50 of his paintings in stock in 1885 (Nonne 2000, p. 42, note 35).
79 The quotation is from Bernard 1924, which was based on Van Gogh's own choice of words (letters 663, 693, 694): '[...] beaux comme des barbottines'. *Barbotine* is a sort of slip or liquid clay.



19 Adolphe Monticelli, *Still life with flowers*, 1875-77. Lyon, Musée des Beaux Arts.



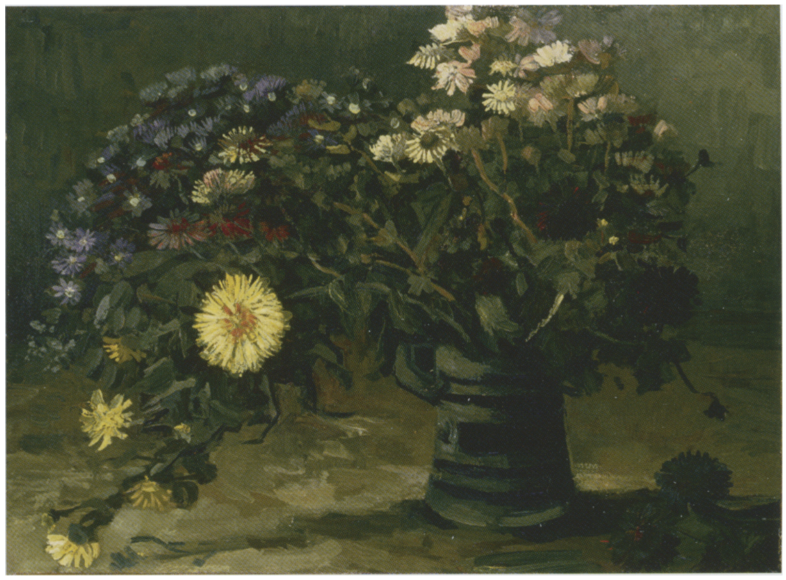
20 *Vase with zinnias* (F 252 JH 1140), 1886. Washington, The Kreeger Museum.

regarded as the only trustworthy people [439], but because the form had separated itself from content at the end of 1885, he could now freely admire the style of this Provençal artist.

It seems, in retrospect, that Van Gogh had discovered in Monticelli's oeuvre 'something important about himself which he would not have been able to discover at that moment without this assistance'.[80] It was only through that work that he understood what his own potentialities of brushwork and palette were, although it would still take a couple of years before he dared and was even able to allow both elements to flourish. When he moved to the south of France in 1888 he thought that he could replicate Monticelli's accomplishments almost literally,[81] and when Albert Aurier sang the praises of his recent, expressive style in 1890 he made a point of stating in his letter of thanks to the critic that his own achievement was not nearly as original as Aurier thought. It was all due to Monticelli.[82]

After first painting two flower pieces in a more conventional style (cats. 67, 68), Van Gogh began following Monticelli's example by experimenting with a bright, sometimes even garish use of colour and a far sketchier style (see cats. 69-71), and comparison with a flower piece of 1885 shows just how less detailed and descriptive his brushwork had become (figs. 20, 21). The fact that he had expanded both his colour repertoire and his variety of touch in a relatively short space of time cannot be seen in isolation from the genre that he had chosen for renewal: the flower still life. It was a subject that was well suited to such a focus on form alone. What was also important was that he had barely treated the subject in his Dutch period, so was

80 These are the words of H.A. Gomperts, who gave a very enlightening analysis of the phenomenon of influence among writers in his book *De schok der herkenning*, Amsterdam 1967, with the quotation on p. 28: '[...] iets belangrijks van zichzelf, dat hij zonder deze hulp op dat moment niet had kunnen vinden'.
81 Van Gogh's admiration of Monticelli is expressed most clearly in letters 598, 689 and 853.
82 Letter 598. For Aurier's 'Symbolist' interpretation of Van Gogh's oeuvre see Simpson 1999, pp. 133-46.



21 *Still life with a bouquet of daisies* (F 197 JH 1167), 1885. Philadelphia Museum of Art.

not hampered by any automatism in the working or thinking process. He could experiment freely.

He did not imitate Monticelli literally, of course, but worked in his spirit. It is interesting, though, to see how much less abstract and more 'realistic' his flower paintings are than Monticelli's (figs. 19, 20). The result is sometimes called 'Impressionistic', but even if the term is justified it was the result of imitating Monticelli. The latter had adopted the heightened colour palette of the Impressionists in the 1870s, but unlike them he combined it with the old goal of sharp contrasts between light and shade, and here Van Gogh followed in his footsteps (cat. 71).

In the autumn, when there were no more flowers available, Van Gogh continued on his new course with other still-life subjects (see cat. 72) and with scenes of parks and corners of the city.[83] He then painted several self-portraits and still lifes to see whether his new knowledge would also be successful with a more tonal instead of colouristic approach (cats. 73-75), a variation that he had also tried out in Nuenen. Leaving aside his academic adventure at the beginning of the year, this all meant that after his arrival in Paris he continued working fairly consistently to achieve what he had regarded as his artistic goal at the end of his time in Holland. It was a form of painting based on Realism with a rather coarse, 'manly' look in which he found colour more important than chiaroscuro, and felt closer as a colourist to the Romantics than to the artists of the Hague School.

He did not make a clear break with these ideals until the winter of 1886-87, when he really began to make the achievements of the Impressionists his own. From then on the use of traditional tonal values was absolutely taboo. 'It's not possible to do both values and colour' [594], was his later response to the criticism of Gustave Kahn, who had written disapprovingly of three of Van Gogh's 1887 paintings at an exhibition held by the Indépendants artists' society.[84] According to Kahn, Van Gogh had paid 'little attention to the value and precision of his tones', but Vincent wrote laconically to Theo: 'You can't be at the pole and the equator at the same time' [594].

A dialogue with modernism

In order to assess this change of course properly one has to take a look at Van Gogh's personal situation, which was far from rosy from the autumn of 1886 onwards. He had not yet sold anything, dashing the hopes he had had on leaving Nuenen. He had hoped to earn money when he first arrived in Paris, but that idea

83 For the latter works see p. 43, note 22.
84 Kahn 1888.

had now evaporated.[85] In addition, he did not like city life, and to make matters worse the two brothers were finding it difficult to get along.[86] Vincent's output of paintings fell off in the autumn of 1886, and possibly prompted by the thought of following even further in Monticelli's footsteps he toyed with the idea of moving to the south of France. He thought of leaving in 'February or even sooner' [569].

However, this tentative decision 'to go away in the spring', as Theo later put it, came to nothing.[87] Around the turn of the year the future suddenly looked brighter. Vincent began an affair with the Italian Agostina Segatori (see cats. 83, 84), who allowed him to exhibit in the restaurant she ran. Artistically, too, he was less isolated, for it was around this time that he made friends with two French artists, Emile Bernard and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and all of this removed much of the point from the planned move to distant parts.

This change in Van Gogh's social life roughly coincided with his decision to abandon the style that he had formulated in Holland and developed by following Monticelli's example. Instead of an unpolished, rough expression he opted for its diametrical opposite: painting *à l'essence* (cats. 78-83, 85-95).[88] He combined this use of highly thinned paint with a delicate, occasionally very draughtsman-like manner in the early months of 1887, for which he used pointed, springy brushes. He sometimes experimented with parallel lines, contours and hatchings in combination with more traditional painterly solutions, as well as with licks and occasionally even dots, although never completely systematically (fig. 23). This search for an effective way of breaking forms up into smaller segments was coupled with an altered approach to colour. He was searching for luminosity, and began using the white ground layer of the support as part of the paint surface (cats. 88-90, 94-95), as well as adding new pigments with greater colour intensity to his palette.[89] In addition, there was a better-considered although not entirely dogmatic application of the theory of complementary colours.

The nature of his compositions changed at the same time. He occasionally depicted large objects in the foreground, and used emphatic diagonals (cats. 84, 89, 90, 95). These formal innovations were based on inventions from Japanese prints, which he began collecting on a large scale at the end of 1886.[90] He was also painting café life for the first time (cats. 84, 90) and depicting courting couples out in the city (cat. 104), with which he wanted to present himself more emphatically than before as a representative of modern French painting, at least as far as iconography was concerned.

Although not all these changes can be brought under a common denominator, the use of small segments of colour and the more rational application of complementary colours indicate a great receptivity to what had been the talk of the town in progressive artistic circles since the summer of 1886: Neo-Impressionism.[91] Its central idea was that coloured light in nature could be evoked with the simultaneous contrast of unmixed colours on the canvas. If set down in small, separated forms they would merge optically in the eye. Although strictly incorrect, that was the scientific view current at the time, and it had already been mentioned and praised as such by Charles Blanc, whose very scientifically oriented ideas about art were effortlessly annexed by the modernists.[92]

We can only speculate about the reasons for this change of course. Van Gogh

85 This can be inferred from a letter of 28 February 1887 from Theo to his mother in which he complained that Vincent was no longer making the slightest effort to earn money (b 906). 'He has painted a couple of portraits that turned out well, but he always does it for nothing. It's a shame that he doesn't have any desire to start earning, because if he wanted to he could do it here; but one can't change a person' ('Hij heeft een paar portretten geschilderd die goed zijn uitgevallen, maar hij doet het altijd voor niets. Het is jammer dat hij geen lust krijgt om wat te gaan verdienen, want als hij het wilde zou hij het hier wel kunnen; maar men kan een mensch niet veranderen').

86 Letter from Andries Bonger to his parents, 31 December 1886 (b 1867): 'He has now decided to part from Vincent; living together is not possible' ('Hij is nu besloten van Vincent te scheiden; samen wonen is niet mogelijk').

87 Theo wrote to his mother on 28 February 1887 telling her that 'he's still here and doesn't seem to be planning to go away in the spring as he had originally planned to do' ('hij is altijd nog hier en schijnt ook geen plan te hebben om in 't voorjaar naar buiten te gaan zooals hij er eerst plan op had'; b 906).

88 See London 2004-05, pp. 25-27, for this traditional technique, which Degas had used in the 1870s and was later adopted by Raffaëlli and Toulouse-Lautrec.

89 See pp. 148, 149.

90 According to Orton 1971.

91 The theory had been put into words by the critic Felix Fenéon in his *Les impressionnistes en 1886*, Paris 1886 (Fenéon 1970, vol. 2, pp. 29-52; see also Halperin 1988, pp. 81-85, 92-103). J. Gage, *Color and meaning. Art, science and symbolism*, London 1999, esp. pp. 196-227, gives an overview of the colour theory of the day.

92 The modernists' annexation of Blanc's essentially conservative views is discussed in Flax 1989. See also Zimmermann 1991, pp. 28-41.

may have felt drawn to the colour theory of the Neo-Impressionists because of his great admiration for Blanc's *Grammaire des arts du dessin*.[93] He was familiar with the idea that separate touches of colour merged into the correct colour in the eye. It was just the way of applying the colour, the *pointille* or stippling, that was new to him. He accordingly barely used it, opting instead for dashes and longer strokes, possibly because of his earlier experience of drawing with the pen. He applied them in different colours, with the result that this new, essentially graphic technique provided him with a solution to his old puzzle of how 'to regard drawing and colour as one' [535]. Since this way of painting in turn gave him ideas for the further development of his drawing after he left Paris, it may have been an important reason for him to go more deeply into this new visual idiom.[94]

This is guesswork, though; it is not entirely clear. For it is also possible that around the turn of the year he had merely hoped that he could advance himself artistically by doing the opposite of what he had done so far. In other words, by working thinly and in a draughtsman-like way after his period of impasted, rough painting à la Monticelli he wanted to investigate his own limits, whereupon they could possibly be pushed back. This would have been comparable, in a way, to his earlier decision to practise the traditional manner of drawing at the academy in Antwerp and in Cormon's studio in Paris, even if it was diametrically opposed to his old, personal way of modelling.

Whatever the reasons for his change of course, it is clear that, in contrast to the beginning of his time in Paris, he did not want to focus on making money. The idealistic need to play a part in the development of contemporary art gained the upper hand, as it had in Holland, although now he had different role models. Perhaps he thought in the back of his mind that this would make him economically better off in time.[95] Theo had long seen the financial potential of the Parisian avant-garde, but as the manager of a branch of Boussod, Valadon & C[ie] he was tied hand and foot to the conservative taste of his employers, so was unable to give the most recent art a chance in his gallery. The one thing that is certain is that Vincent now began to take the lead in reacting to the latest developments.[96]

The influence of Bernard and Toulouse-Lautrec

Current art-historical wisdom has it that Van Gogh embraced modernism largely due to Paul Signac, 'the most important single influence for Vincent's dramatic and total shift [...] away from a lingering Realist and towards a mixed Impressionist-Pointillist style', as Welsh-Ovcharov put it.[97] This is based not only on the assertions of Van Gogh's friend Emile Bernard, who wrote that '[Van Gogh] tried out a free form of *divisionism* on Signac's advice', but also on what the Pointillist himself said about his acquaintanceship with Van Gogh.[98] 'Yes, I knew Van Gogh from Père Tanguy's,' he later told the French art critic Coquiot. 'I met him on other occasions at Asnières and Saint-Ouen; we painted on the banks of the river, lunched at the guinguette, and returned to Paris on foot, along the avenues of Saint-Ouen and Clichy.'[99]

These reminiscences do not bear out what the paintings tell us, though. However tentatively, Van Gogh was already experimenting with the Neo-Impressionist style in the early months of 1887 (cats. 79-82), and since he only seems to have met

93 'He was particularly pleased with a theory that the eye carried a portion of the last sensation it had enjoyed into the next, so that something of both must be included in every picture made,' wrote Hartrick, who got to know him at the end of 1886 (Hartrick 1939, p. 44).
94 The relationship between his Paris paintings from 1887 and his drawings from his first year in Arles is briefly discussed in Van Heugten 2008, pp. 42-46.
95 For a survey of the art trade at the time see Thomson 1999, pp. 61-149.
96 Theo had been wanting to deal in the very latest modern art for some time, but only received permission to do so from his employers in May 1887. See ibid., pp. 81-124.
97 Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 165. That view has since become commonplace in the literature on both Signac and Van Gogh.
98 Bernard1924: '[...] sur les conseils de Signac, [Van Gogh] s'essayait à un *divisionnisme* libre', and Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 29-32.
99 Coquiot 1923, p. 140: 'Oui, j'ai connu [...] Van Gogh chez le père Tanguy. Je le rencontrai d'autres fois à Asnières et à Saint-Ouen; on peignait sur les berges; on déjeunait à la guinguette et on revenait à pied à Paris, par les avenues de Saint-Ouen et de Clichy'.

Signac in mid-May of that year, when he first visited Asnières, the Pointillist was not involved in his conversion to the principles of the movement.[100] Nor were there any exhibitions at the time where Van Gogh could have studied the new art in detail, so he must have been influenced by it in some other way.[101] Through artist friends, but who?

As noted above, Van Gogh only knew foreign, non-French artists in his early days in Paris, but by the time he left for Arles at the end of February 1888 he had met several native avant-garde artists, both established names and rising stars.[102] Most of those contacts were fairly superficial, though, and very recent. For example, he only got to know Seurat and Gauguin in his last few months in Paris, while the older, established artists like Degas, Guillaumin, Pissarro and Sisley were probably mainly contacts of Theo's.[103] Vincent's own acquaintances were Anquetin, Bernard and Toulouse-Lautrec, and he was only close to the last two,[104] to whom he 'solemnly promised to write' just before he left for Arles [588].[105]

He had met the three of them in Cormon's studio in early 1886, but only got to know Bernard personally in the autumn of that year, and through him Anquetin.[106] He probably became better acquainted with Toulouse-Lautrec around the same time.[107] Those three friends had just left Cormon's studio with the idea of carving out a niche for themselves among the Parisian avant-garde.[108] Van Gogh joined them in the endeavour, and for the first time there was a social dimension to his career as an artist. At the end of 1887 he even organised an exhibition of works by all of them at Etienne-Lucien Martin's *café concert* (see cat. 136), supplemented with others by a chance Dutch guest, the minor master Arnold Hendrik Koning.

When Van Gogh got to know the three French artists around New Year 1886 they had just fallen under the spell of Neo-Impressionism. As Bernard later wrote: 'Almost all of us soon fell for Pointillism, because of its theories',[109] so Van Gogh's

100 Van Gogh could only have met Signac in Asnières around the middle of the month (see also cat. 105), because the latter left for a long stay in Comblat-le-Châteauon on 23 May; see Marina Ferretti-Bocquillon, 'Chronologie', in Cachin/Ferretti-Bocquillon 2000, p. 345. However, Van Gogh's contact with Signac was far less personal than many authors have assumed on the basis of the statement in note 99. When Signac came to visit him in Arles in the spring of 1889 Vincent told Theo that he was surprised by his character: 'I find Signac very calm, whereas people say he's so violent, he gives me the impression of someone who has his self-confidence and balance, that's all. Rarely or never have I had a conversation with an Impressionist that was so free of disagreements or annoying shocks on either side' [752]. This does not suggest that they had seen each other regularly in the past or knew each other well.

101 Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 219, does mention an exhibition of Neo-Impressionist work in the Galerie Martinet (December 1886-January 1887), but there were only four paintings on show there: one by Signac, one by Camille Pissarro and two by Seurat (Bailly-Herzberg 1980-91, vol. 2, pp. 86, 87, 98, 99).

102 As far as can be made out from the correspondence, Van Gogh's artist friends or acquaintances were Louis Anquetin, Emile Bernard, Edgar Degas, Paul Gauguin, Armand Guillaumin, Camille and Lucien Pissarro, Georges Seurat, Paul Signac, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and perhaps Alfred Sisley. For his earlier, non-French friends see pp. 19-22, esp. notes 10 and 11.

103 For Theo as a dealer, and his contacts, see Thomson 1999, pp. 61-148.

104 Van Gogh did not rate Anquetins achievements as highly as Bernard's: 'the leader of the Petit Boulevard is without any doubt Seurat, and young Bernard has perhaps gone further than Anquetin in the Japanese style', as he wrote in 1888 [620].

105 See also letter 585, in which he told Theo that he was going to write to both of them.

106 See Van Tilborgh 2007, pp. 65, 66, on the date of the first meeting between Van Gogh and Bernard. That it was Bernard who introduced Van Gogh to Anquetin is stated in Bernard's 'Louis Anquetin', 1934, in Bernard 1994, vol. 1, p. 274. Bernard later wrote on several occasions that he only met Van Gogh for the first time in the autumn of 1887 ('Vincent van Gogh', 1926, in Bernard 1994, vol. 1, p. 250, and Bernard 1952 II, p. 313), but here his memory was playing tricks on him (either that or he was a little careless about dates). He knew a lot about the relationship between Van Gogh and Agostina Segatori (see cats. 83, 84), which shows that the two artists already knew each other well in early 1887. In addition, Van Gogh wrote that both Bernard and Anquetin were influenced by his exhibition of Japanese prints in Le Tambourin, which he had organised some time at the beginning of that year (see cat. 84 and letter 640).

107 There are few hard facts about Van Gogh's contacts with Toulouse-Lautrec. Hartrick could not remember ever having seen them together, but 'I know they foregathered' (Hartrick 1939, p. 50). Suzanne Valadon, who probably began modelling for Toulouse-Lautrec in 1886 (Murray 1991, pp. 96, 133), later recalled that Van Gogh attended Lautrec's weekly gatherings but that people took little notice of him (reported in Coquiot 1923, p. 146, and Fels 1928, p. 136). One interesting fact that can help establish the relationship between the two artists is that the family collection in the Van Gogh Museum contains several issues of *Le Mirliton*, the house magazine of Aristide Bruant's Montmartre cabaret. The earliest one is dated 29 December 1886 (3 copies; call number Ts 2439a-h), and interestingly that was the first issue to contain an illustration by Toulouse-Lautrec (*Le Quadrille de la chaise Louis XIII à l'Elysée*). Welsh-Ovcharov accordingly suggested that Van Gogh 'assiste à des soirées' of *Le Mirliton* (Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 35, 57, note 59, and Paris 1988, pp. 17, 26, notes 20, 30), which was wrongly interpreted in Drawings 3, p. 231, note 1, as meaning that Van Gogh helped Toulouse-Lautrec at receptions in Bruant's cabaret. Toulouse-Lautrec's relationship with Bruant and his cabaret is detailed in Murray 1991, pp. 101-22, and London/Paris 1991-92, pp. 192, 193. This shows that they already knew each other at the end of 1886. According to Murray 1991, pp. 137, 138, 245, Toulouse-Lautrec's portrait of Van Gogh was made in early 1887, and it is also known for certain that Toulouse-Lautrec knew Theo van Gogh in the spring of that year (at the end of March at the earliest); see Schimmel 1991, p. 111.

108 The friendship between the three of them is described by Emile Bernard in his 'Louis Anquetin artiste-peintre', 1932, in Bernard 1994, vol. 1, pp. 260-63.

109 Bernard, Bernard 1952 I, p. 318: 'Nous tombâmes bientôt à peu près tous à force de théories dans le pointillisme'.



22 Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Waiting at Grenelle*, 1886-87. Williamstown (Mass.), Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.



23 *Café table with absinthe* (cat. 90).

cautious experiments in this style certainly sprang from their interpretations of Neo-Impressionist theory, but he seems to have learned most from Toulouse-Lautrec.[110] His sudden conversion to *peinture à l'essence*, his decision to portray café life (fig. 23) and his imitations of compositions from Japanese prints seem inconceivable without that artist's example (fig. 22), whose studio was in rue Tourlaque, just around the corner from the Van Gogh brothers' apartment.[111]

The problem is, though, that we do not know exactly when Toulouse-Lautrec began applying Neo-Impressionist theory in his work.[112] At the beginning of 1887, anyway, he was experimenting with the use of small, thin, comma-shaped areas of colour that had much in common with Van Gogh's manner, although the latter had a greater attachment to short lines and hatchings (possibly in free imitation of Degas, who was Toulouse-Lautrec's great model; see cats. 85-87). Toulouse-Lautrec was putting the theory of complementary colours into practice at the time, although discoloration has made the results difficult to assess, as demonstrated by the portrait of his mother from the first half of 1887 (fig. 24). This small work painted with small brushstrokes now looks bluish but was described at the time as an 'exaltation of yellow and violet'.[113]

It was almost certainly Bernard who introduced his friends to the ideas of Neo-Impressionism. He had started experimenting with optical colour mixing back in

110 It should be added that Bernard later destroyed many of his Neo-Impressionist paintings, and that only a few of Anquetin's works from this period are known.

111 Bernard was living with his parents in Asnières at the time. It has been suggested that Van Gogh and Toulouse-Lautrec 'simply responded in similar ways to the influences of a shared environment', while the similarities are also explained as 'an affinity' rather than 'a proven influence of style in either direction' (Murray 1991, p. 138, and Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 175, respectively), but it seems to me that this is doing Toulouse-Lautrec a disservice. His influence has remained unnoticed because his relationship with Van Gogh did not extend beyond Paris, either personally or artistically.

112 There is no recent catalogue of his oeuvre that would allow his development to be followed chronologically. Murray 1991, pp. 243-48, however, is a useful supplement to Dortu 1971.

113 J. de Lahondés, *Messager de Toulouse*, June 1887. Quoted in an English translation in Murray 1991, p. 135. Hartrick, who met Toulouse-Lautrec around now, wrote: 'I think he understood Chevreul's theory of colours and the division of tones better than anyone else, also applied to painting' (Hartrick 1939, p. 92).



24 Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Portrait of the artist's mother*, 1887. Albi, Musée Toulouse-Lautrec.

the autumn of 1886 (fig. 25), and although he was still very young he was given the role of *auctor intellectualis*.[114] The fact that art historians later regarded Signac, not Bernard, as the model followed by Van Gogh was due to Bernard himself. He rejected the Neo-Impressionist principles in the spring of 1887, and came up with new ideas about the direction that modern art should take in the autumn of that year, and they in turn were taken up not just by Van Gogh but by Gauguin as well.[115] Bernard took pride in that influence for the rest of his life, which is why he identified Signac and not himself in his reminiscences as the person who had initiated Van Gogh into Neo-Impressionism, for the truth would have detracted from his own role as the initiator of later French modernism, which he propagated so assiduously.

The Neo-Impressionist example

Van Gogh's attempts to follow in Toulouse-Lautrec's footsteps by painting figures and scenes of modern city life in the first few months of 1887 (see cats. 84, 90) did not continue into the spring. Although there are several portraits, self-portraits and still lifes from this period (see cats. 97-100), he was now focusing more and more on landscape. As in the previous year, he initially worked on the hill of Montmartre, but as far as we have been able to reconstruct events (see cat. 105) he went out painting in and around nearby Asnières from the middle of May.[116] His great need 'to go away', as Theo had put it, led to the decision to go and work in this country village which had long been popular with artists.[117] He worked there until roughly the end of July, making between 30 and 40 landscapes there, mainly of subjects which were an extension of the Impressionist and Neo-Impressionist repertoires, such as sun-drenched scenes of the river and bridges.[118]

114 Anquetin, like Bernard, fell under the spell of Neo-Impressionism in the autumn of 1886, as shown by Bailly-Herzberg 1980-91, vol. 2, p. 71, no. 353. Pissarro wrote at the time, probably in September of that year, that Anquetin 'also wants to follow that route. It's a real steeplechase' ('[...] aussi désire marcher dans la voie. C'est un vrai steeple-chase').

115 Bernard said that he and Anquetin rejected the Neo-Impressionist principles after visiting Signac's studio on 12 March 1887 (Bernard 1994, vol. 1, pp. 262, 273, 318, and Mannheim/Amsterdam 1990, p. 96).

116 It is usually assumed that he travelled there from Paris, but the Comtesse de la Boissière could also have provided him with a *pied-à-terre*; see p. 24, note 20.

117 This virtually coincided with the brothers making peace. The situation was still intolerable in March (see Hulsker 1990, p. 246), but on 26 April 1887 Theo wrote to his sister Willemien: 'We have made peace, because it served no good to carry on in that way. I hope that it will last' ('We hebben vrede gemaakt, want het diende nergens toe om op die manier voort te gaan. Ik hoop dat het van duur zal zijn'; b 911).

118 Van Gogh merely wrote in the autumn of 1887 that he had been painting 'landscape in Asnières this summer' [574], but it can be deduced from letter 571, which was written before 1 August 1887, that he had already been making trips there for some time.



25 Emile Bernard, *The beach of Canale*, 1886. Geneva, Petit Palais.

Toulouse-Lautrec's influence waned as this emphasis on landscape grew. Although *peinture à l'essence* never disappeared entirely from his repertoire, Van Gogh began applying the paint more thickly in April and May, and he replaced the hatchings and thin lines with longer and fuller strokes, which made his work look more painterly and robust. By now he had had the chance to study the work of the very first Neo-Impressionists himself, so no longer needed to rely on Bernard's and Toulouse-Lautrec's interpretations of the style. Seurat and Signac were well represented at the exhibition of the Indépendants artists' society from late March to the beginning of May 1887, as Pissarro was at the May exhibition in the gallery of the art dealer Petit, and in the latter month he made four paintings that were clearly inspired by Signac's 'landscapes with coarse stippling' (fig. 26) [669]: *Square Saint-Pierre, Labourer on a country road* (fig. 27), *Garden with courting couples: Square Saint-Pierre* (fig. 28), and probably *Interior of a restaurant.*[119] He no longer achieved luminosity by allowing the ground layer to contribute to the overall effect, as he had done previously (fig. 23), but by following Signac's example with a more or less systematic use of dots or short strokes or by including a lot of white in the colour spectrum.[120] These works preceded his painting trips to Asnières, and the result was so striking that Theo made special mention of his progress to the family back in Holland: 'His paintings are becoming lighter,' he wrote in a letter of 15 May 1887, '& his great quest is to get sunlight into them'.[121]

However, these attempts to master the systematic use of the small *pointille* and to crown them with an ambitious painting, *Garden with courting couples: Square Saint-Pierre* (fig. 28), petered out, and Van Gogh never used stippling again. He may have come to the same conclusion as Bernard, which was that the method actually led to a grey, unpleasant effect,[122] but it is more likely that he did not really like it. Being time-consuming, it was not suited to *plein-air* painting, and it was also at odds with his personal preference for swift, spontaneous execution.

Nor is there any reason to believe that Van Gogh really shared the decorative aims of the leaders of Neo-Impressionism, despite the fact that his paintings had of course become far less descriptive and more abstract and flat since the beginning of the year. That was due not only to his strict application of the theory of simultaneous contrast – with houses, for example, being rendered with purple and yellow

119 *Square Saint-Pierre* is F 276 JH 1259 (on which see also cat. 101), and *Interior of a restaurant* is F 342 JH 1256.
120 On this see pp. 150-151.
121 Theo van Gogh to Elisabeth van Gogh, 15 May 1887 (b 912): 'Zijn schilderijen worden lichter & het is zijn groot zoeken om er zonlicht in te krijgen'.
122 See Bernard 1952 I, p. 318.



26 Paul Signac, *Riverbank: Les Andelys*, 1886. Paris, Musée d'Orsay.

27 *Labourer on a country road* (F 361 JH 1260), 1887. Private collection.



(cat. 94) – but also to the use of short brushstrokes and lines. However, he never took this to extremes. It was only with *Garden with courting couples: Square Saint-Pierre* that he made an ambitious attempt to approach Seurat's far more decorative oeuvre (figs. 28, 29), but it was still far removed from the 'abstract tapestries of paint' his French colleague was seeking.[123] Instead of even, systematic brushwork he opted for a static composition with only local repetitive strokes.

Since the beginning of 1887 he had mainly been investigating whether he was able to use the dots or dashes and lines of the Neo-Impressionist model, but that all changed when he decided to start working in Asnières. He now allowed himself to be influenced in his brushwork not so much by art as by *nature*. His new repertoire of solutions built up through Pointillism and painting *à l'essence* was thus refined and expanded. His method was sometimes close to Impressionism (fig. 30; cat. 106) and sometimes to Pointillism (fig. 31), although he was fairly consistent in

123 Chicago 2004, p. 114.



28 *Garden with courting couples: Square Saint-Pierre* (cat. 104).



29 Georges Seurat, *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte*, 1884-86, painted border 1888-89. Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago, Helen Birch Bartlett Memorial Collection.

30 *Restaurant de la Sirène, Asnières* (F 312 JH 1253), 1887. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum.

31 *View of the Île des Ravageurs* (F 315 JH 1320), 1887. Private collection.





using dashes rather than dots. There is no need to search for an influence here, for his solutions were not inspired by artistic models – they came from the subject itself. In July he even returned briefly to working on an underlying layer with an "old-fashioned" mid-tone (cats. 111-14, 116-20), which brought more perspective back into his scenes. In other words, he was mainly searching for ways of reconciling his approach of former years, with its focus on nature, with the new, more abstract style of the Neo-Impressionists.

New ideas from Bernard: abstraction and stylisation

Van Gogh's artistic explorations in and around Asnières came to an end in late July, and in August he used his new-found knowledge to make two very large canvases that were intended to be the culmination of his experiments with colour and brushwork of the past few months: *Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette* and *Allotments in Montmartre*.[124]

After these achievements, in which the colours are still separated in accordance with the Neo-Impressionist doctrine, Van Gogh changed his iconography. He was not to paint a single landscape or townscape until February 1888, when he left Paris for Arles. With a few exceptions he stuck to self-portraits, portraits, still lifes and three copies after Japanese prints (cats. 126-37).[125] This self-imposed confinement to the studio could be explained by the falling temperature out of doors, but that is not convincing, because it had been considerably colder in March and April than it was in the autumn, and that had not prevented him from going out to paint (cats. 91-94).[126]

His decision to take a temporary break from *plein-air* painting can be associated with Bernard, who returned from Pont-Aven that autumn.[127] Their friendship blossomed as never before. They even painted together in Bernard's studio until Van Gogh had an argument with his father.[128] Bernard had rejected Neo-Impressionism by now and was proclaiming new ideas about the direction modern art should take. The method of Seurat and Signac 'was good for the vibrant production of light, it stripped out colour, and I immediately threw myself into the opposite theory', he later explained.[129] Influenced by Japanese printmaking he experimented with the 'simplification of colour using full tones harmonised in accordance with a system of almost flat tints', his most extreme example of which dates from the winter of 1887-88 (fig. 32).[130] In an extension of this style, which became known as Cloisonnism a year later, Bernard argued for a restriction of the pigments to 'the seven colours that make up white light (with each pure colour from the palette represented)'.[131] He was searching for 'a style freed from any realistic imitation. The preoccupations with space, planes and effect being rigorously banished in order to make way for colour and line, which for me embodied the meaning of my work'.[132]

Since painting out of doors, according to Bernard, was 'the opposite of art, because of its realistic tendencies', there was every reason for Van Gogh to work only in the studio from now on.[133] He was already well trained in the use of a fairly restricted range of colours, and could readily fall in with his friend's goal of 'searching for a personal and highly coloured simplism'. Probably with far more self-

124 Cat. 115 and F 350 JH 1245 (fig. 115a).

125 The exceptions are *View of a viaduct in Asnières* (F 239 JH 1267), *Interior of the restaurant of Etienne-Lucien Martin* (F 549 JH 1572) and the presumed preliminary study for it (F 549a JH 1573). The change of genre coincided with a sharp drop in his output. He made around 60 paintings between May and September 1887, but in the following six months produced fewer than 30.

126 The maximum temperature in September, for example, still averaged 18.4°C, and that was 4 degrees higher than in April that year (Relevés Météorologiques, April 1887 and September 1887, Paris, Météo-France).

127 Bernard had left Paris on 13 April 1887 but it is not known exactly when he returned. On his trip the previous year he had annotated his last drawings in September, so that was the earliest month he could have been back (Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 211). If we assume that he stayed away as long in 1887, he would have returned to Paris at the end of September or beginning of October. According to Harscoet-Maire 1997, p. 161, he came back in October, but no source is given for that assertion.
A second reason for Van Gogh to retreat into his studio is given in a letter that Theo wrote in 1889 in which he discussed the difficulties that his brother had had in Paris. Quite apart from the fact that no models wanted to pose for him he was 'forbidden to sit and work in the street' (Van Crimpen 1999, p. 161, letter 46, 14 February 1889). Although Ronald Pickvance concluded in Martigny 2000, p. 144, that the police really had issued him with a street banning order, it is more likely that this passage refers to his attempts to depict the Paris ramparts, something that had been forbidden since time immemorial because of their strategic, defensive function (kind communication of Travers Newton).

128 This is recorded in Bernard's 'Introduction', in Lettres 1911, p. 12.

129 Bernard 1952 I, p. 318: '[...] était bon pour la production vibrante de lumière, il dépouillait la couleur, et je me jetai aussitôt dans la théorie contraire'.

130 Bernard 1952 II. p. 313: '[...] simplifier la couleur par des tons entiers et accordés selon un système de teintes presques plates'. He stated that his experiments in imitating the Japanese took place after his return from Brittany, and mistakenly said that that was in 1886.

131 Emile Bernard, 'Quelques souvenirs de Pont-Aven (1888)', 1939, in Bernard 1994, vol. 1, p. 301: '[...] les sept couleurs dont se compose la lumière blanche (chaque couleur pure de la palette y répondant)'. The term Cloisonnism was coined by the critic Edouard Dujardin in his article 'Aux *XX* et aux *Indépendants*. Le cloisonisme', *La Révue Indépendante* (1 March 1888), pp. 487-92. The history of the term is discussed in Welsh-Ovcharov 1981, esp. pp. 19-24.

132 Emile Bernard, 'Mémoire pour l'histoire du symbolisme pictural en 1890', 1919, in Bernard 1994, vol. 1, pp. 202, 203: '[...] un style exempt de toute imitation réaliste. Les préoccupations d'air, de plans, d'effet en étaient rigoureusement bannies pour faire place à la couleur et la ligne, desquelles j'attendais le sens de mon ouvrage'.

133 Emile Bernard, 'Louis Anquetin artiste-peintre', 1932, in Bernard 1994, vol. 1, p. 262: '[...] le contraire de l'art par ses tendances réalistes'.

32 Emile Bernard, *Earthenware pot and apples ('Premier essai de Synthétisme en de Simplification')*, 1887-88. Paris, Musée d'Orsay.

33 *Quinces, lemons, pears and grapes* (cat. 128), without its original frame.





awareness than before, he now stuck to a simple palette, as can be seen from his programmatic self-portrait from the end of his time in Paris, in which he depicted himself with a palette on which there are unmixed, whole colours (cat. 137). He also began working with even thicker paint, so that the colours gained in force once more, and his brushwork became broader and more painterly than in the preceding period. The search for luminosity was replaced by a quest for bright, saturated colour alone, with the paint once again covering almost the entire canvas.

His dialogue with Bernard probably began with still lifes (fig. 33), in which he worked in a far more stylised way than he had ever done before (cats. 126-28). Unlike his friend, he remained an adherent of the theory of complementary colours in these efforts to produce a more abstract, stylised form. Complementary colours



34 *Piles of French novels* (cat. 134).



35 *Piles of French novels and roses in a glass ('Romans parisiens')* (F 359 JH 1332), 1887-88. Private collection.

placed side by side and the use of almost undulating brushstrokes suggest that he did not want to abandon the idea of shimmering light that was so essential to the Neo-Impressionists.[134] He was evidently looking for a compromise between the two main movements of the day, and that resulted in strange but remarkably intriguing paintings, such as his 'streaky portraits', as Bernard later christened his self-portraits of this period (cats. 129, 130).[135] Van Gogh avoided contours in them and opted for 'modelling by drawing directly with a brush' [555], which he had also done in his self-portraits from the summer, albeit a little less dogmatically (cats. 116-20).

After these initial investigations, Van Gogh began imitating the most essential

134 Van Gogh also disliked dogmatism in art, and was fiercely critical of Bernard's refusal to exhibit with Signac; see letter 575.
135 Emile Bernard, 'Introduction', in Lettres 1911, p. 22: '[...] portraits à zébrures'.

element from Bernard's programme, namely his 'system of almost flat tints', which he also combined with contours modelled on Japanese prints. Such a purely decorative approach was new for him, and he began very simply but very effectively by copying such a print, Hiroshige's *Plum orchard by Kameido*, in which he followed the rules of the new doctrine to the letter by transposing the colours of the original into the three primary and three secondary colours (cat. 131). By using 'flat' colours he abandoned the traditional attempt to create an illusion of space even more wilfully than before, which ushered in a new phase in his development as a painter. You could say that he was now fully converted to modernism.

Unlike Bernard, he always combined this search for a decorative effect with painterly brushwork. The two things were essentially contradictory, but painting with a loaded brush was now simply part of his repertoire after his experiments in the style of Monticelli. He continued to do so cautiously in *Courtesan: after Eisen* (cat. 133) and more forcefully in his first version of *Piles of French novels* (fig. 34). Possibly worried about employing this revolutionary approach, which departed from the line laid down by Bernard, he then reverted to the achievements of Neo-Impressionism, which unlike budding Cloisonnism was already held in some regard in the circles where the artistic crème de la crème was defined. In his second version of his painting with novels (fig. 35) he once again employed a fairly systematic, tight-knit pattern of short dashes and loose dabs, supplemented with hatchings. He also applied small strokes of that kind in his portraits of this period and in his self-portrait (see cats. 136, 137), although always in combination with a simple use of colour and a quest for a decidedly tactile paint surface.

So at the end of his time in Paris Van Gogh was proving to be a self-willed participant in the debate about the direction to be taken by modern art. Self-willed because he did not become an adherent of one of the two current movements, neither Neo-Impressionism, which advocated a systematic use of complementary colours and optical mixing by means of small colour segments, nor the Cloisonnism propagated by Bernard, which aimed for a flat but bright use of colour and a forceful handling of line. He had recently experimented with the extremes of both (figs. 27, 34), but in his own art he steered a middle course between them.

His combination of these two incompatible approaches made his paintings look rather odd, but it is doubtful whether he intended them to contribute directly to the discussion about the direction to be taken by modern art. He was still searching, and regarded his works as studies, albeit with one or two exceptions (see cats. 104, 115). They were usually small and on a cheap variety of canvas, although at the end of 1887 he suddenly selected a more expensive, twill support (see cats. 135, 136), but that may have been prompted solely by his search for a different, tactile paint layer.

Van Gogh's own contribution

The fact that Van Gogh did not have a very high opinion of his Paris oeuvre emerges indirectly from what he said in 1888 about the 'timid Impressionism' of the Belgian painter Eugène Boch. He had told him that following this example 'was the best thing he could do, although he would lose 2 years on it perhaps, *delaying his originality* [emphasis added], but after all, I told him, it's as necessary now to pass through Impressionism properly as it once was to go through a Paris studio' [669].[136] There

136 Later, in 1890, Vincent wrote reminding Theo that just after arriving in Paris he had asserted that he would not be able to do anything before he had 'two hundred canvases' [854].





36 *Orchard with cypresses* (F 513 JH 1389), 1888. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.

37 *Orchard with cypresses* (F 551 JH 1396), 1888. Private collection.

would only be room for personal development, in other words, after that training, and there can be no doubt that he was here passing judgement on his own development from 1886. At first he was primarily submissive and searching, only becoming truly original two years later in Arles. While in Paris he not only wrestled with the new, modern techniques but also, at the end of 1887, struggled to find a style that would do justice to what he himself regarded as the personal element in his artistry.

It is interesting to see how Van Gogh dealt with this problem. He himself said that he had little self-confidence when he left Paris, but he recovered completely



38 *The sower* (F 422 JH 1470), 1888. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.

when he took up *plein-air* painting once again in the spring of 1888 after a six-month break.[137] He still regarded Neo-Impressionism and Cloisonnism as his points of reference. For example, at the end of April 1888 he concluded his series of orchards with a triptych, the wings of which were in those two contrasting styles (he destroyed the central scene) (figs. 36, 37).[138] In one of them he revisited the *pointillé* that he had not used since the spring of 1887, while incorporating the example of Japanese prints in the other, saying that he tried 'to capture the essence in the drawing – then I fill the spaces demarcated by the outlines (expressed or not) but felt in every case' [596].[139]

He later called the Pointillist painting of the orchard 'too feeble' [615]. In his view the colour was not forceful enough, and in June he painted *The sower* (fig. 38) in an attempt to harmonise his personal preference for a bold palette with the Neo-Impressionist method of working. He abandoned the delicate *pointillé* in favour of rough brushwork, as he had done in his landscapes from Asnières.[140] One colour contrast, yellow against purple, he developed logically in accordance with Neo-Impressionist principles, and later added blue against orange. He also used the latter two colours for the framing lines around the scene, following Seurat's recent example. The Pointillist had first applied such a frame in complementary colours in his *Models* of late 1887 (fig. 39), which Theo and Vincent saw together before he left for Arles.[141]

However, Van Gogh had great trouble with both the colour and the brushwork in *The sower*, kept making changes to it and ultimately called it 'a failure'[664]. He regarded it as one of his 'exaggerated studies', which were 'atrociously ugly and bad', but did show how he wanted to advance modern art [680]. He was probably frustrated by his desperate attempts to follow Seurat's example by making his colouring and thus brushwork systematic. His own strength lay in a spontaneous, unthought-out and slightly raw manner, and after making *The sower* he understood that his personal talents and desires were more compatible with Cloisonnism, the other point of reference.

137 Letter 870, among others, shows that he was not feeling very self-confident when he left Paris.
138 The centrepiece was probably the painting of a cherry tree that he spoke about in letters 600 and 606.
139 He put the usefulness of the two opposing approaches to the test once again soon afterwards in two still lifes (F 410 JH 1426 and F 384 JH 1425), although the stippled variant was not extreme but more of an intermediate form.
140 His ambition was to show that colour itself spoke a 'symbolic language' [634]. For an overview of the interpretations of this work see Otterlo 2003, pp. 233-37.
141 Seurat had used these complementary colours for an inner frame that separated the canvas from the white outer frame, as we know from Gustave Kahn's description of the work in *La Revue Indépendante*, 6 March 1888, pp. 161, 162, quoted in Waschek 1995 I, pp. 154, 259, note 25. Van Gogh could have read that review in Arles, but since he and Theo had visited Seurat's studio at the end of his time in Paris, he may well have learned of the plan there. It was an open secret to artists in Paris that Seurat had come up with the idea of applying Pointillist borders in complementary colours (Waschek 1995 I, p. 153). The visit to Seurat's studio is mentioned in letter 710, and in letter 707 Van Gogh spoke of his preference for 'Seurat's frame [...] for inventiveness'.



39 Georges Seurat, *Models*, 1886-87. Merion, The Barnes Foundation.

142 Writing from Arles in August he said that 'what I learned in Paris *is fading*' [663]. He was benefiting from 'my ideas that came to me in the country before I knew the Impressionists. And I wouldn't be very surprised if the Impressionists were soon to find fault with my way of doing things, which was fertilized more by the ideas of Delacroix than by theirs. Because instead of trying to render exactly what I have before my eyes, I use colour more arbitrarily in order to express myself forcefully. Well, let's let that lie as far as theory goes, but I'm going to give you an example of what I mean' [663]. He later repeated that: 'But I – I say so frankly – I'm returning more to what I was looking for before coming to Paris, and I don't know if anyone before me has talked about suggestive colour. But Delacroix and Monticelli, while not talking about it, did it' [683].

That intuitive, spontaneous manner became increasingly important to him. Now that he had come to a full realisation that he had a talent and taste of his own, he gradually lost interest in everything he had learned in the second year of his stay in Paris. He himself said that he increasingly fell back on his ideas and taste from the period before he became acquainted with modernism.[142] After rejecting Neo-Impressionism in June 1888 he concentrated on making studies consisting of 'a single *flow of impasto*'. He felt 'forced to lay the paint on thickly, à la Monticelli' [689], and he began combining that loaded brush with the Cloisonnist approach in his most ambitious paintings. As in his first version of *Romans parisiens* (fig. 34) he aimed for 'flat tints, but coarsely brushed in full impasto' in his *Bedroom* (Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum) [706], while seeking for 'a way of using the brush without stippling or anything else, nothing but a varied brushstroke' [668] in his equally decorative *Sunflowers* (London, National Gallery). His execution was perhaps a little rough and unpolished, but it was simply a fact of life that he had a taste 'for rough things, for Monticellis, for barbotine' [663]. Or as he explained to Gauguin: 'I always have an animal's coarse appetites. I forget everything for the external beauty

of things, *which I'm unable to render* because I make it ugly in my painting, and coarse, whereas nature seems perfect to me' [695].

It was in this awareness of his own artistic personality that Van Gogh even began proclaiming his preference for 17th-century Dutch painting to Bernard that summer. He had suppressed that old love for at least 18 months, but now he presented Hals and Rembrandt as his great role models, as opposed to the Italian primitives whom his friend now adored.[143] During his creative rivalry with Gauguin he sought a compromise between his old, Dutch ideals and the modern quest for abstraction, which Gauguin particularly encouraged, the final result of which was his *Berceuse*, which he later considered to be a failure.[144]

To put it another way, in his heart Van Gogh wanted to be both modern as well as faithful to the Realists' repertoire, but that could not be done if he took the norms of his friends and colleagues as his point of departure. He did not resign himself to that in his first year in the south of France, but his ambition ebbed away at the end of 1888 because of his illness. He lost his faith in being able to overcome this contrast in his own way, and in an unguarded moment he even felt that the desire that he had had in Paris to vie with the avant-garde had been a mistake. 'Now, myself as a painter, I'll never signify anything important, I sense it absolutely', he wrote at the end of his time in Arles. 'I sometimes regret not having simply kept the Dutch palette of grey tones, and brushed landscapes in Montmartre without pressing the point' [768]. He was wrong, but he simply did not have a good idea of the true value of his own achievement, which had been changed so much by his meeting with the avant-garde of Paris.

He was sometimes all too human.

143 For his ideals during his first year in Arles see Douglas W. Druick and Peter Kort Zegers in Chicago/Amsterdam 2001-02, pp. 114-269, and Hecht 2006, pp. 34-62. At the end of June 1888 he suggested to Bernard that it would be a good idea for both of them to go to the Louvre to study not just the primitives but also the 17th-century Dutch masters, so it can be deduced that he had not spoken of this old love to his friend before (letter 632).
144 Letter 822.

Van Gogh's working practice: a technical study

Ella Hendriks
with scientific analysis by Muriel Geldof

Introduction

An essential aspect of the research carried out for the new catalogue of Van Gogh's Antwerp and Paris paintings has involved study of the materials and techniques employed. Although scholars such as Welsh-Ovcharov have provided a compelling visual account of the artist's painted oeuvre of the period, so far very little had been published based on the results of technical examinations and analysis.[1] To remedy this, a comprehensive and systematic campaign to examine 93 paintings in the collection of the Van Gogh Museum was initiated in 2001. They comprise five of the small group of six surviving pictures he made in Antwerp, as well as almost half of his Paris oeuvre. Notwithstanding the fact that this survey does not cover Van Gogh's entire output from the period, it does represent a unique opportunity to examine such a large body of works belonging to a collection with an unusually well-documented physical and conservation history.

Each painting was subjected to a thorough technical examination, registering the physical characteristics of the picture support, ground and paint layers, as well as any additions or alterations due to later restoration treatment. A range of investigative techniques was employed: including examination of the picture surface in normal, raking and ultraviolet light, stereomicroscopy, the study of X-radiographs, and infrared imaging. Microscopic paint samples were taken in order to study the build-up and composition of ground, paint and varnish layers. Samples were examined and analysed at the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage (ICN), from 2011 incorporated under the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE), in collaboration with the Shell Technology Centre in Amsterdam (STCA).[2] Further contri-

1 Welsh-Ovcharov 1976. A useful point of departure for the current study was given by an unpublished survey of the condition and technique of the Van Gogh paintings in the Van Gogh Museum collection that was conducted in the mid-1980s by the government's Central Research Laboratory for Objects of Art and Science (currently the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands), as discussed in the introductory essay, 'Treatment history of the collection'. Two publications have since addressed the significance of findings based on X-ray and infrared images, whilst a recent campaign of examinations of Van Gogh paintings in the collection of the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo has provided valuable comparative material. See Hulshoff/Van Heugten 1994, Van Heugten 1995 and Otterlo 2003.

2 The following analytical techniques and procedures were employed.

Incident Light Microscopy
Paint samples were embedded in polyester resin and ground with SiC-paper. The resultant cross-sections were examined under a Zeiss Axioplan 2 microscope, both with incident polarised light and incident UV-light (from a Xenon-lamp and a mercury short arc photo optic lamp HBO, respectively). The filter set 'UV H365' used for examination in UV-light consisted of the following filters: excitation BP 365/12, beam splitter FT 395 and emission LP 397.

Scanning Electron Microscopy with Energy Dispersive X-ray Spectroscopy (SEM-EDS)
SEM-EDS analyses were carried out at Shell Research and Technology Centre, Amsterdam, using a JEOL JSM 5900 LV scanning electron microscope and a Noran Vantage EDS-system with pioneer Norvar detector. The primary electron beam energy was 25 keV. Some samples were coated with carbon, while others were examined without a coating using the low vacuum mode.

Fourier Transform Infrared Spectrometry (FTIR)
FTIR analysis was performed with a Perkin Elmer Spectrum 1000 FTIR spectrometer combined with a Perkin Elmer AutoImage System FTIR Microscope, using a Miniature Diamond Anvil Cell with type IIa diamonds.

Thermal Hydrolysis and Methylation Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry (THM-GC-MS) in combination with Curie Point pyrolysis
Sample material was made into a suspension with a few drops of tetra methyl ammonium hydroxide in methanol, and the suspension applied to a pyrolysis wire. The wire was pyrolysed at 625°C. By the combined effect of heat and reagent, the fatty acids, resin acids and alcohols present undergo hydrolysis and/or methylation. The polymer fraction of the sample is also broken up into smaller molecules. The sample mixture was separated on a VF 5 ms column by gas chromatography, and the separated components detected and identified using mass spectrometry.

High Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC)
A volume of 250 µl 3 molar hydrochloric acid was added to the sample. Hydrolysis was performed in a closed vial for 16 hours at 105°C. The sample was then evaporated to dryness under a nitrogen flow. A volume of 10 µl of a mixture of ethanol, water and tri-ethylamine (TEA) (2:2:1, v:v:v) was added and the sample again evaporated to dryness. Subsequently, 20 µl ethanol, water, TEA and phenyl isothiocyanate (7:1:1:1, v:v:v:v) were added to the sample and allowed to react for 20 minutes at room temperature. The solution was once more evaporated to dryness and redissolved in 50 µl buffer A. Analysis was done on a Supelcosil C18 column (250 x 4.6 mm) with a gradient of buffer A: 0.7 molar sodium acetate in water with 2.5 ml TEA, pH = 6.4, buffer B: water and buffer C: acetonitril. Detection was done at 254 nm absorption.

Staining test for proteins
The staining reagent Amido Black 2 was prepared and used as described by Martin 1977.

butions were made by researchers participating in the De Mayerne Programme, a four-year programme (2002-06) established and funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) to carry out molecular studies in conservation and technical studies in art history. Aspects of Van Gogh's painting technique were examined from different angles within this multidisciplinary programme, ranging from the use of advanced imaging analytical techniques for a study of ground sample cross-sections from a number of Paris paintings on *carton* supports, to the manufacture of precise replicas of a selection of Van Gogh's prepared canvases and tube paints, to a detailed survey of 19th-century (French) documentary and archival sources relating to Van Gogh's suppliers of painting materials. Furthermore, an experimental study was conducted on the fading and deterioration of red lake paints used by Van Gogh, which involved a broad collaboration between institutions.[3]

On the following pages, findings from these various paths of research are combined in order to reconstruct Van Gogh's working practice in the period. Different aspects of his procedure are discussed in turn, from the purchase of materials, choice of picture supports (principally canvas and *carton*), ground layers, reused pictures, underdrawing (chiefly the aid of a perspective frame, and the practice of squaring to transfer an image) and finally to the use of colour. Tables listing the relevant technical data underpin a discussion of each topic (pp. 527-62). Consideration is given to the possible practical reasons for Van Gogh's choice of painting materials, their sources and methods of preparation, the ways in which they were employed, and the probable impact of unsound technique and fugitive materials on the way the pictures look today. In a separate essay entitled 'Developing technique and style', this collective information is used to illustrate the very close link that existed between technique and style in Van Gogh's paintings of the period, whereas the catalogue entries offer a detailed discussion of technical findings for each picture in turn. Technical information may have consequences for issues of chronology and attribution, for example, but at a more fundamental level it has led to a better understanding of Van Gogh's changing artistic intent, demonstrating the usefulness of an integrated technical and art-historical approach to the study of his work.

Sources of painting materials

Antwerp

When Van Gogh arrived in Antwerp on 24 November 1885, he soon set about the task of improving his method and materials as part and parcel of his aim to become a professional artist. His letters reveal that he had felt limited by the quality of the colours that he had been able to obtain in Holland, hoping to find better ones in Antwerp [532, 542]. On or about 6 December he received colours ordered from the shop of Jan Baijens (1838-1934) in Rechttestraat in Eindhoven, where he had set up an account [546]. According to plan, however, by 14 December he was able to supplement these forwarded supplies with some good-quality colours bought in Antwerp, as well as with new types of canvas support and fine-quality brushes [547].

3 The red lake study was conducted jointly by the Van Gogh Museum, the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE, formerly the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage (ICN)), the Shell Technology Centre in Amsterdam (STCA), the De Mayerne Programme, as well as the Department of Conservation and Technology at the Courtauld Institute of Art, and the Scientific Department at the National Gallery in London. See the Introduction for a more detailed description of the various research projects mentioned and the individuals involved.

– Purchase of new colours

Van Gogh wrote of his visit to Petrus Joannes Tyck (1821-c. 1888-90), established as 'marchand de couleurs pour peintres-artistes' at 8 Rubensstraat, whom he considered the best paint manufacturer in the city.[4] Tyck was reportedly most forthcoming with information on technical aspects, including the greens that were permanent, and Van Gogh's following letters express delight with the new colours purchased on Tyck's advice. 'Cobalt – is a divine colour, and there's nothing so fine as that for putting space around things. Carmine is the red of wine, and it's warm, spirited as wine. So too is emerald green. It's false economy to do without them, those colours. Cadmium likewise' [549 and 550]. As discussed in the section 'Use of colour' below, analysis of samples has confirmed the use of the bright pigments named (cobalt blue, red lake, emerald green and cadmium yellow), which replaced duller pigments that had featured on his Dutch palette (Prussian blue, Naples yellow and earth pigments) in some of his Antwerp paintings.

– Purchase of new canvases

Van Gogh's introduction of new colours went hand-in-hand with his purchase of other types of canvas. Four days after arriving in Antwerp, he had received loose canvas and around 40 stretching frames sent on from Nuenen [532 and 545], which he initially combined to make picture supports in his customary way (cats. 45, 49 and probably 46).[5] Subsequently though, he began to purchase ready-made, off-the-shelf canvases that were pre-stretched in somewhat squarer, standard commercial sizes (cats. 47, 48, 50 and fig. 46a).[6] He explained this change in practice in a letter of 9 December, announcing that the canvases he had brought with him were too small for the portrait heads, since his use of other colours necessitated more space for the surroundings [547]. The combined effect of a changed format and brighter tonality to create a new spaciousness is well illustrated by two portraits painted in mid-December, making generous use of the pigment cobalt blue in the background, which he considered to be a 'divine colour, and there's nothing so fine as that for putting space around things'[550; see cats. 47, 48]. Essentially, this introduction of standard format supports and the revamping of his Dutch palette paved the way for his practice in Paris.

Paris (Table 1)

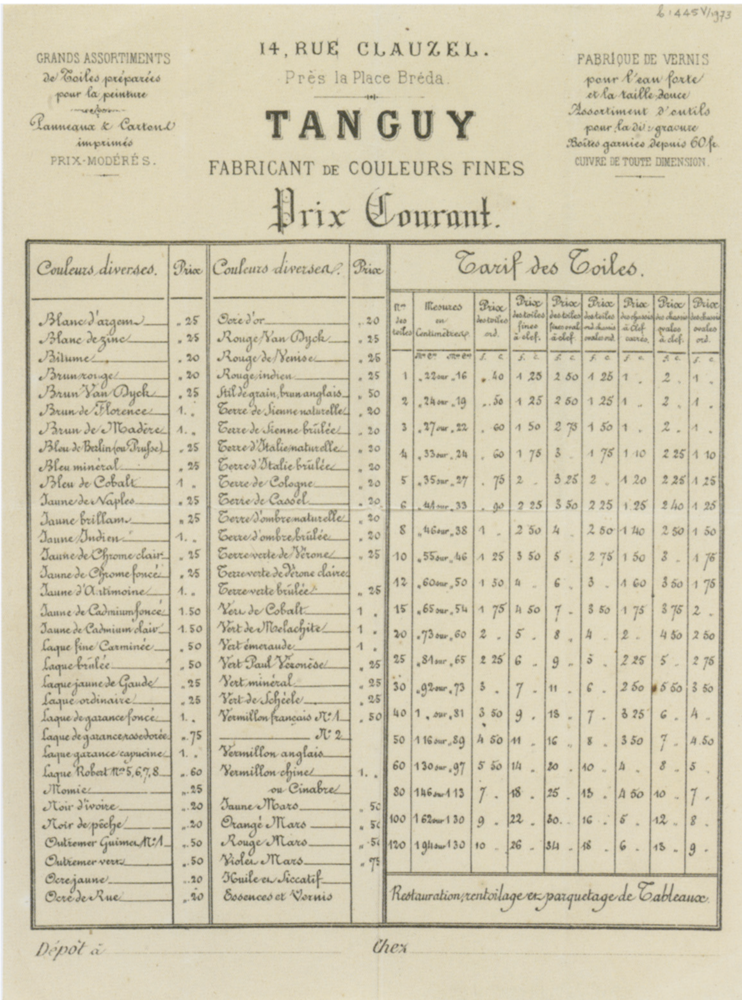
In contrast to Antwerp (or indeed other places where he stayed), in Paris there are very few letters and no paint orders to inform us where Van Gogh bought his painting materials. Fortunately, though, other evidence helps us to re-create his practice there. Table 1 lists some examples of Paris paintings with original trade stamps and labels surviving on the backs of the picture supports (canvases and their stretching frames, or *cartons*). The registered details of the companies named on these labels and stamps have been compiled from the Paris editions of Didot-Bottin, *Annuaire-almanach du commerce, de l'industrie, de la magistrature et de l'administration* (the contemporary equivalent of the *Yellow Pages*), including their retail addresses for the period 1886-88 when Van Gogh was in Paris. Bearing in mind that this survey covers only part of Van Gogh's Paris oeuvre, and that it is quite rare to find such direct records left behind on paintings, this selective information provides a valuable insight into the sources of his materials in the period.[7]

4 Letter 547, note 9.

5 A third piece from the strip of ready-primed canvas cut up to make the picture supports for cats. 45 and 49 was reused for *Terrace and observation deck at the Moulin Le Blute-fin, Montmartre* (p. 45, fig. 9), as discussed in the entry on cat. 45.

6 *Head of a woman with a scarlet bow in her hair* (F 207 JH 979) was painted on a commercial *figure* 12 canvas, though its original tacking edges were cut off at a later date. Jim Wright, formerly chief conservator at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, kindly facilitated examination of the portrait. Van Gogh's letter of 19 December 1885 [549] complains about the expense of two canvases he had purchased for making portraits.

7 Unfortunately it has been the common practice of past restorers to cover up the original backs of paintings by lining or marouflage treatments, as well as to replace original stretching frames, causing such evidence to be hidden or lost.



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Blanc de zinc	.25	Rouge Van Dyck	.25
Bitume	.20	Rouge de Venise	.25
Brun rouge	.20	Rouge indien	.25
Brun Van Dyck	.25	Stil de grain, brun anglais	.50
Brun de Florence	1.	Terre de Sienne naturelle	.20
Brun de Madère	1.	Terre de Sienne brûlée	.20
Bleu de Berlin (ou Prusse)	.25	Terre d'Italie naturelle	.20
Bleu minéral	.25	Terre d'Italie brûlée	.20
Bleu de Cobalt	1.	Terre de Cologne	.20
Jaune de Naples	.25	Terre de Cassel	.20
Jaune brillant	.25	Terre d'ombre naturelle	.20
Jaune Indien	1.	Terre d'ombre brûlée	.20
Jaune de Chrome clair	.25	Terre verte de Vérone	.25
Jaune de Chrome foncé	.25	Terre verte de Vérone claire	
Jaune d'Antimoine	1.	Terre verte brûlée	.25
Jaune de Cadmium foncé	1.50	Vert de Cobalt	1.
Jaune de Cadmium clair	1.50	Vert de Melachite	1.
Laque fine Carminée	.50	Vert émeraude	1.
Laque brûlée	.50	Vert Paul Véronèse	.25
Laque jaune de Gaude	.25	Vert minéral	.25
Laque ordinaire	.25	Vert de Schéele	.25
Laque de garance foncé	1.	Vermillon français N° 1	.50
Laque de garance rose dorée	.75	N° 2	
Laque garance capucine	1.	Vermillon anglais	
Laque Robert N° 5, 6, 7, 8	.60	Vermillon chiné	1.
Momie	.25	ou Cinabre	
Noir d'ivoire	.20	Jaune Mars	.50
Noir de pêche	.20	Orangé Mars	.50
Outremer Guimet N° 1	.50	Rouge Mars	.50
Outremer vert	.50	Violet Mars	.75
Ocre jaune	.20	Huile et Siccatif	
Ocre de Rue	.20	Essences et Vernis	

Tarif des Toiles.

N° des toiles	Mesures en Centimètres	Prix des toiles ord.	Prix des toiles fines à clef.	Prix des toiles fines oval. à clef.	Prix des toiles ord. chassis ovales ord.	Prix des chassis à Clef carrés.	Prix des chassis ovales à clef.	Prix des chassis ovales ord.
	m. c. m. c.	f. c.	f. c.	f. c.	f. c.	f. c.	f. c.	f. c.
1	.22 sur .16	.40	1 25	2 50	1 25	1 .	2 .	1 .
2	.24 sur .19	.50	1 25	2 50	1 25	1 .	2 .	1 .
3	.27 sur .22	.60	1 50	2 75	1 50	1 .	2 .	1 .
4	.33 sur .24	.60	1 75	3 .	1 75	1 10	2 25	1 10
5	.35 sur .27	.75	2 .	3 25	2 .	1 20	2 25	1 25
6	.41 sur .33	.90	2 25	3 50	2 25	1 25	2 40	1 25
8	.46 sur .38	1 .	2 50	4 .	2 50	1 40	2 50	1 50
10	.55 sur .46	1 25	3 50	5 .	2 75	1 50	3 .	1 75
12	.60 sur .50	1 50	4 .	6 .	3 .	1 60	3 50	1 75
15	.65 sur .54	1 75	4 50	7 .	3 50	1 75	3 75	2 .
20	.73 sur .60	2 .	5 .	8 .	4 .	2 .	4 50	2 50
25	.81 sur .65	2 25	6 .	9 .	5 .	2 25	5 .	2 75
30	.92 sur .73	3 .	7 .	11 .	6 .	2 50	5 50	3 50
40	1 . sur .81	3 50	9 .	13 .	7 .	3 25	6 .	4 .
50	1 16 sur .89	4 50	11 .	16 .	8 .	3 50	7 .	4 50
60	1 30 sur .97	5 50	14 .	20 .	10 .	4 .	8 .	5 .
80	1 46 sur 1 13	7 .	18 .	25 .	13 .	4 50	10 .	7 .
100	1 62 sur 1 30	9 .	22 .	30 .	16 .	5 .	12 .	8 .
120	1 94 sur 1 30	10 .	26 .	34 .	18 .	6 .	13 .	9 .

Restauration, rentoilage et parquetage de Tableaux.

Dépôt à

Chez

1 Price list of Père Tanguy, c. 1888-90. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum. It is thought that this is the price list that Theo used to place Vincent's paint orders in the period c. 1888-90. The approximate date is supported by the mention of cobalt green on the list of colours for sale. The earliest known listing of this colour in tube oil paint occurs in the 1889 catalogue of Winsor & Newton (see Carlyle 2001, p. 534).

– Tasset et L'Hôte

In Paris, Van Gogh became acquainted with the company Tasset et L'Hôte, who went on to become a main supplier of his painting materials from his stay in Arles up until his death in 1890. Tasset et L'Hôte was a fairly small company, and is also known to have sold materials to Paul Signac, Alfred Sisley, and Edgar Degas, for example.[8] Its trade stamp is recorded on the back of F 118 JH 932, *Earthenware bowl with potatoes* (p. 43, fig. 7), suggesting that Van Gogh had purchased the ready-stretched canvas from the firm by late 1886 when the painting is thought to have been made. There are several examples of Tasset et L'Hôte's trademark on the proprietary stretchers and canvases used for his 1887 pictures as well (fig. 3). Van Gogh very probably bought paints from their Paris shop too, though there is no definite proof of this.

– Julien-François (Père) Tanguy

By the autumn of 1886 Van Gogh had also met Père Tanguy who, along with Tasset et L'Hôte, would become the other main source of his painting materials from the late Arles period on. The informal dealer and paint seller was well known for his dealings with avant-garde painters such as Auguste Renoir, Paul Cézanne and Camille Pissarro.[9] Van Gogh painted Tanguy's portrait in early 1887 (p. 44, fig. 8), confirming their close association by this date. Furthermore, a letter the artist wrote between about 17 and 19 July 1887 recalls how, when painting *plein-air* landscapes around Asnières, he had had many canvases, and that Tanguy had been very good

8 Vergeest 2000 provides an indexed reference to paintings by Paul Signac that bear the company stamp of Tasset et L'Hôte. Kate Lowry, former chief paintings conservator at the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff, provided information on a Tasset et L'Hôte stamp present on a canvas used by Alfred Sisley for a landscape *Moret-sur-Loing (Rue de Fosses)* in 1892. On paintings by Edgar Degas that employed materials from the firm see New York etc. 1998-99 and London 2004-05, p. 145, Edgar Degas, *Combing the hair (La Coiffure)* c. 1896.

9 Letter 570 to Charles Angrand, dated 25 October 1886, mentions a visit to Tanguy. On Tanguy and the Impressionists see Callen 2000, p. 103.

LEFRANC & Cie ✱ PARIS

CHASSIS NUS ET TOILES TENDUES SUR CHASSIS
POUR LA PEINTURE A L'HUILE

Numéros des toiles	Mesure d'un côté invariable	Dimensions: Portrait	Dimensions: Paysage haute	Dimensions: Paysage basse	Dimensions: Marine haute	Dimensions: Marine basse	Chassis nus, Portrait-paysage et marine: Ordinaire N° 110	Chassis nus: à Clés N° 111	Chassis tendus, Toile ordinaire, Châssis carré: Ordinaire N° 112	Toile ordinaire, Châssis carré: à Clés N° 113	Toile ordinaire, Châssis ovale: Ordinaire N° 114	Toile 1/2 fine, Châssis carré: Ordinaire N° 115	Toile 1/2 fine, Châssis carré: à Clés N° 116	Toile fine, Châssis carré: Ordinaire N° 117	Toile fine, Châssis carré: à Clés N° 118	Toile fine, Châssis ovale: à Clés N° 119	Numéros des toiles
							fr. c.	fr. c.	fr. c.	fr. c.	fr. c.	fr. c.	fr. c.	fr. c.	fr. c.	fr. c.	
1	21c5 sur	16c ou	14c		11c5		» 20	» 40	» 60	» 65	1 50	» 70	» 75	» 75	» 90	3 50	1
2	24.5 —	19 —	16		14		» 25	» 45	» 65	» 75	1 60	» 80	» 90	» 90	1 »	3 60	2
3	27 —	21.5 —	19		16		» 28	» 50	» 70	» 90	1 75	» 90	1 »	1 »	1 25	3 75	3
4	32.5 —	24.5 —	21.5		19		» 30	» 60	» 80	1 »	2 »	1 »	1 25	1 25	1 50	4 »	4
5	35 —	28.5 —	27	24	21.5	18.9	» 32	» 70	» 90	1 25	2 25	1 25	1 50	1 50	1 75	4 50	5
6	40.5 —	32.5 —	29.7	27	24	21.5	» 35	» 75	1 »	1 50	2 50	1 50	1 75	2 »	2 25	5 »	6
8	46 —	38 —	35.1	32.5	29.7	27	» 40	» 80	1 30	1 75	3 »	1 75	2 25	2 50	2 75	6 »	8
10	55 —	46 —	43.2	38	35.1	32.5	» 50	» 90	1 50	2 25	3 50	2 50	2 75	3 25	3 75	7 »	10
12	61 —	50 —	45.9	43.2	40.5	38	» 60	1 »	1 80	2 50	4 »	2 75	3 25	3 75	4 25	8 »	12
15	65 —	54 —	48.5	45.9	43.2	40.5	» 70	1 10	2 »	3 »	4 50	3 25	3 75	4 50	5 »	9 »	15
20	73 —	59.5 —	56.7	54	51.3	48.5	» 80	1 25	2 50	3 50	5 50	3 75	4 25	5 25	5 75	10 50	20
25	81 —	65 —	62.1	59	56.7	54	» 95	1 50	2 80	4 25	6 50	4 75	5 25	6 50	7 »	11 50	25
30	92 —	73 —	70.2	67.5	64.8	62.1	1 20	1 75	3 30	5 25	7 50	5 75	6 50	8 »	8 50	14 »	30
40	1.00	81 —	73		65		1 40	2 »	4 25	6 25	8 50	7 »	7 50	9 50	10 »	16 »	40
50	1,16 —	89 —	81		73		1 80	2 50	5 25	7 50	10 50	9 75	9 50	12 »	12 75	19 »	50
60	1,30 —	97 —	89		81		2 »	2 75	6 25	9 »	12 50	10 50	11 »	14 25	15 »	22 »	60
80	1,46 —	1,13.4 —	97		89		3 »	3 50	8 20	11 50		14 »	14 50	19 »	19 75		80
100	1,62 —	1,30 —	1,13.4		97		3 50	4 50	10 »	14 50		17 »	18 »	24 »	25 »		100
120	1,94 —	1,30 —	1,13.4		97		4 »	6 »	12 »	18 »		21 »	22 »	29 »	31 »		120

Les châssis et toiles tendues hors mesure sont livrés dans les vingt-quatre heures.

2 Lefranc & Cie 1889 catalogue listing standard-size canvases.

to him until his 'old witch of a wife' had put a stop to this generosity [571]. Almost a year later he had run up the considerable bill of 250 francs for paints received and was disgruntled by the fact that Tanguy (pressurised by his wife) now requested cash payment, despite the fact that he had given him paintings to sell in return [637 and 638]. Later the painter A.S. Hartrick, who had met Van Gogh late in 1886, affirmed this course of affairs: 'Tanguy used, I believe, to let him have colours sometimes in exchange'.[10]

Tanguy's canvases and paints were reputedly of dubious quality, and rather cheap, as a surviving price list for the period c. 1888-90 confirms (fig. 1). Comparison of this list with contemporary trade catalogues for major companies such as Bourgeois Aîné and Lefranc & Cie (fig. 2) reveals that Tanguy charged at least 10% less for an equivalent item. Although Van Gogh expressed dissatisfaction with some of the colours supplied by Tanguy in his later correspondence, in June 1888 he wrote that he was always glad to obtain paints from him, even if they were just a little worse than elsewhere, provided they were not too expensive [634, 629]. In fact, he took a charitable view of Tanguy right up to the end of his life, and was willing to overlook the shortcomings of his materials in return for certain favours received [889]. However, poor quality certainly cannot be considered a hallmark unique to Tanguy, and indeed so far no features have been found that would make it possible to pick out his materials from those obtained from other sources.[11]

– Other suppliers

In Paris, it seems that Van Gogh was not yet restricting himself to materials obtained from Tasset et L'Hôte and Père Tanguy, as he largely did later on. On the contrary, this preliminary study of trade stamps and labels on the backs of his supports tells us that they were purchased from at least seven other addresses, all of them quite small businesses established in and around Montmartre. Perhaps not surprisingly, it seems that Van Gogh simply took advantage of the many colourmen established in these artists' quarters. Sometimes he conveniently opted for the shop that was closest at hand, such as Rey et Perrod located just a stone's-throw away from his first address at 24 rue Laval (cat. 54 and fig. 4), or Pignel-Dupont, on the same street as Theo's later apartment at 54 rue Lepic (cats. 56-59, 61-63, 67 and fig. 5).[12]

10 Hartrick 1939, p. 47.

11 No stamps have yet been found to suggest that Tanguy marked the products he sold, nor has sample analysis disclosed a unique fingerprint for the formulation of his paints, although of course we do not know for certain in which Paris works they were used.

12 Rue Laval, Van Gogh's first address, is currently rue Victor Massé. *Portrait of a woman* (cat. 54) is dated to March-June 1886, at which time Van Gogh attended the Paris academy of Fernand Cormon. Two of his fellow pupils there – Toulouse-Lautrec and the Australian painter John Peter Russell – are similarly known to have obtained canvases from the firm Rey et Perrod in this period. For Russell's works see Galbally 1977, cats. 46, 60, pp. 99, 100, dated 1886 and 1887 respectively. An example by Toulouse-Lautrec is *Young woman at a table, 'Poudre de riz'* of 1887 (Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum). Van Gogh's colleague Louis Anquetin later used a canvas with the trade stamp of Rey et Perrod for his *La Dame au Carrick* of c. 1891 (Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum). See further Van Tilborgh/Hendriks 2010, esp. pp. 401, 402.



3 *Courtesan: after Eisen* (cat. 133). Detail of Tasset et L'Hôte trade stamp on the stretcher.



4 *Portrait of a woman* (cat. 54). The back of the canvas, still mounted on its original strainer, bears the stamp of the firm Rey et Perrod.

A former label recorded on one of the plaster casts that Van Gogh owned informs us that he may also have visited the premises of George Latouche, who like Tanguy was a small-scale art dealer and paint seller. Latouche is known to have sold colours to Paul Gachet (Van Gogh's later friend and an amateur painter in Auvers), as well as to Alfred Sisley and Camille Pissarro for example.[13] Another company he used, Hardy-Alan, had fitted stretchers and framed paintings for James McNeill Whistler in the 1860s, and was an important source of materials for Fantin-Latour in the following decades.[14] Although we have no definite proof, when buying picture supports from these Paris shops it seems more than likely that Van Gogh also stocked up on paints and other artist supplies. Altogether this creates a high level of uncertainty regarding the provenance of the materials used in his Paris paintings.



5 *View from Vincent's studio* (cat. 56). Detail of Pignel-Dupont label on the back of the *figure 6 carton* support, marked with the price of 65 centimes.

– Retailers and/or manufacturers?

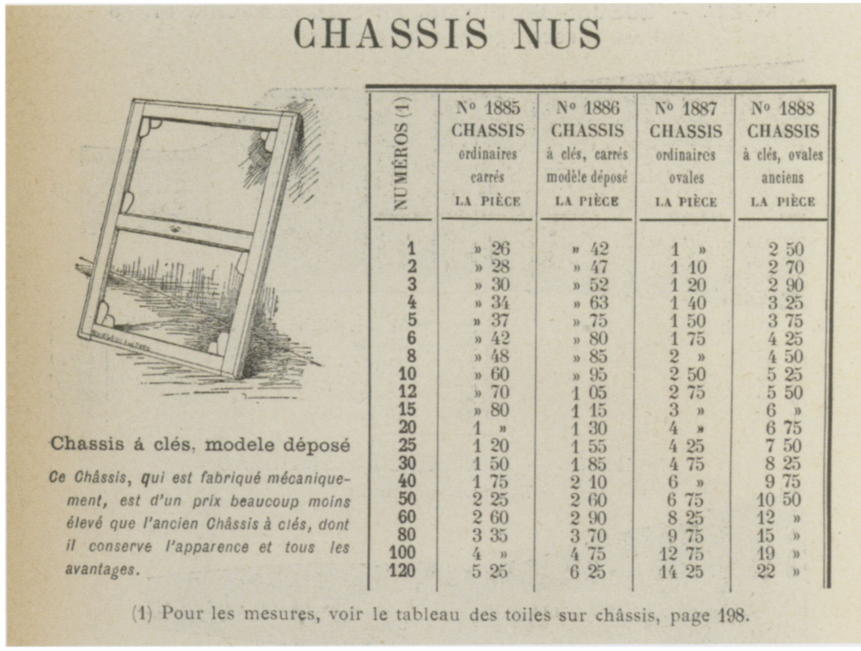
Research into historical sources highlights the grey area that existed between the manufacture and retail sale of artists' materials in the late 19th century. Only two of the colourmen supplying Van Gogh are officially recorded as manufacturers as opposed to being merely retailers of their merchandise. One of them was Hardy-Alan, who made canvases and colours in their workshop at 15 avenue Victor Hugo in Vanves. The other was the long-established Hofer Frères, who were renowned for making colours, varnishes and canvases. However, listings in the trade almanac might not tell the whole story. For example, an 1885 inventory of the shop of Pignel (precursor to the Pignel-Dupont visited by Van Gogh) recorded the presence of pestles and mortars, a colour mill and a tube-filling machine.[15] Evidently though not listed as a paint manufacturer, the premises were well equipped to process materials at the client's request, or to diversify their range. Similarly in Arles, Van Gogh could specially request coarsely ground colours from the firm Tasset et L'Hôte, which he felt would offer both cheaper paints and fresher and more lasting colours [668, 672, 674]. In this case Tasset was listed as a 'manufacturer' in the *Almanac*, yet there is no evidence that it had large premises or an associated factory that would enable it to carry this task out on a large scale.[16] Van Gogh also asked Tanguy for his opinion on coarsely ground pigments [687], and though mentioned as 'retailer' in the *Almanac*, again he was able to make his own paints, having

13 For paintings by Sisley with stamps from Latouche see Vergeest 2000, cat. 977, and Cleveland etc. 1987-88, cat. 17. See also Ravaud 1999, p. 181.
14 For Whistler see McLaren Young *et al.* 1980, cat. 42 on p. 22 and cat. 68 on p. 39. For Fantin-Latour see as indexed in Vergeest 2000.
15 The Tribunal de Commerce du Département de la Seine drew up a list of Eugène Pignel's creditors, as well as the inventory of his shop when the company went into liquidation in 1885. It started up again as Pignel-Dupont. Information supplied by Stéphanie Constantin, Paris.
16 Stéphanie Constantin informs us that Tasset's shop measured only 20 m square according to the *états cadastraux* of 1876.



6 Paul Signac, *Le Port de Portrieux, op. 182*, 1887. Private collection. Detail of Tasset et L'Hôte trade stamp on the stretcher, with a branded *marque de fabrique* from the firm Bourgeois Aîné adjacent.

7 *Chassis à clés, modele déposé* with a *marque de fabrique*, advertised in the 1906 trade catalogue of the firm Bourgeois Aîné.



CHASSIS NUS

NUMÉROS (1)	Nº 1885 CHASSIS ordinaires carrés LA PIÈCE	Nº 1886 CHASSIS à clés, carrés modèle déposé LA PIÈCE	Nº 1887 CHASSIS ordinaires ovales LA PIÈCE	Nº 1888 CHASSIS à clés, ovales anciens LA PIÈCE
1	» 26	» 42	1 »	2 50
2	» 28	» 47	1 10	2 70
3	» 30	» 52	1 20	2 90
4	» 34	» 63	1 40	3 25
5	» 37	» 75	1 50	3 75
6	» 42	» 80	1 75	4 25
8	» 48	» 85	2 »	4 50
10	» 60	» 95	2 50	5 25
12	» 70	1 05	2 75	5 50
15	» 80	1 15	3 »	6 »
20	1 »	1 30	4 »	6 75
25	1 20	1 55	4 25	7 50
30	1 50	1 85	4 75	8 25
40	1 75	2 10	6 »	9 75
50	2 25	2 60	6 75	10 50
60	2 60	2 90	8 25	12 »
80	3 35	3 70	9 75	15 »
100	4 »	4 75	12 75	19 »
120	5 25	6 25	14 25	22 »

Chassis à clés, modele déposé

Ce Châssis, qui est fabriqué mécaniquement, est d'un prix beaucoup moins élevé que l'ancien Châssis à clés, dont il conserve l'apparence et tous les avantages.

(1) Pour les mesures, voir le tableau des toiles sur châssis, page 198.

learned the tricks of the trade as a grinder of artists' colours at Maison Edouard after 1860.[17] A visiting Danish painter, Johan Rhode, recorded how Tanguy ground colours 'in his kitchen', at the back of a 'paltry little shop poorer than the most miserable secondhand dealer's'.[18]

Furthermore, there is evidence that the companies that marked the products they sold may not have been the ones that manufactured them. Firms could simply purchase a registered *marque de fabrique* bearing the company name and logo in order to label merchandise produced elsewhere.[19] A branded *marque de fabrique* (reading 'modèle déposé B') from the firm Bourgeois Aîné has been found on a stretcher stamped by Tasset et L'Hôte for example, suggesting some kind of joint operation between the two companies (fig. 6). The stretcher was used for a painting by Paul Signac dated 1887, and closely resembles stamped Tasset et L'Hôte stretchers that survive in Van Gogh's Paris pictures, which are characterised by rounded keys to tap out the frame where still intact.[20] In turn, the design of Tasset's stretchers bears a marked resemblance to the 'chassis à clés, modele déposé' advertised by Bourgeois Aîné in their trade catalogue, perhaps indicating a common source of manufacture (fig. 7).[21]

– Summary

The combination of these facts leads to two main conclusions. First, the suppliers of Van Gogh's painting materials in Paris are more numerous and less well-documented in the letters than is the case during other periods of his career. Although he was already dealing with Tasset et L'Hôte and Père Tanguy, he evidently shopped around, visiting several other addresses in Montmartre. All of the listed colourmen he used are known to have supplied other Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painters too, which makes it likely that he used some of the very same materials as his contemporaries. Secondly, the chain of events that took place through the different stages from manufacture to retail of the paints and picture supports bought by Van Gogh is likely to have been complex and variable. Taken together, these factors complicate the search for unique and consistent physical characteristics that can help to discriminate the materials used in his Paris pictures for purposes of dating or attribution, for example.

17 Callen 2000, p. 103, and Coquiot 1923, p. 138.
18 Rewald 1973, p. 577.
19 Stéphanie Constantin found documented examples in the Archives de la Ville in Paris, where it is recorded that the Parisian merchant 'Mary & fils' (who was not recorded as a manufacturer) registered a *marque de fabrique* label to be stuck onto 'all articles related to painting and drawing'.
20 The stretcher was used for the painting *Le Port de Portrieux, op. 182*, 1887, private collection, examined by the author in the Van Gogh Museum, report dated 11 June 2001. Another example of a stretcher with both marks used later on by Signac is recorded in Vergeest 2000, cat. 970.
21 Bourgeois Aîné 1906, p. 174.

Picture supports

As for most painters of his day, Van Gogh's favourite support was artists' canvas, which was used for 73 of the 93 paintings examined. Furthermore, 17 pictures were on ready-primed cardboard supports known in France as *cartons*, one on unprepared *carton*, and two on bare wooden panels.

CARTON (Table 2)

– Advantages of use

Compared to canvas, *carton* had two main advantages as a material for picture supports: its lower price, and the fact that it was easier to carry, since it was both light and rigid. These two aspects of cost and convenience were mentioned by Pierre Louis Bouvier (1766-1836) in his *Manuel des jeunes artistes et amateurs en peinture*, first published in France in 1827: 'Cartons and papers are only used to economise on canvas, either when one is beginning in oil painting, or when one wishes to run around the countryside making some studies in oil after nature, without being too loaded and encumbered by stretchers'.[22]

In fact, in the pictures studied, Van Gogh only used *carton* once for a *plein-air* subject (cat. 55). However, a sketch of a Ferris wheel probably done in black chalk on the back of a painted still life (cat. 68) suggests that he carried that *carton* outdoors, perhaps with the intention of using it for another landscape.[23] First and foremost though, Van Gogh seems to have considered *carton* useful as a cheap support material on which to practise. He repeatedly used it for his first attempts when switching to new subject-matter: including studies of plaster casts (cats. 57-63), landscapes (cats. 55, 56), flower still lifes (cats. 68, 69), and tiny self-portraits and portraits (cats. 97, 121, 122). Alternatively, he used a *carton* support for exploring familiar subject-matter in a new style (cat. 78).

– Board characteristics

Van Gogh seems to have used a particularly poor grade of board, in every case only 2 mm thick and built up in two layers of hard-pressed and unrefined wood pulp.[24] *Carton* was sold in a limited range of thicknesses, and this must have been one of the thinnest types available, but it did offer sufficient rigidity in the small formats employed.[25] The low-quality wood fibre also suggests a particularly cheap product, and it has caused the cardboard to darken considerably over time. This change is most disturbing in *Plaster cast of a woman's torso* (cat. 85), where thin washes and touches of colour were applied directly onto the bare board, which exceptionally has no ground. For the remaining 17 works however, Van Gogh used *carton* that was sold ready-prepared with a light priming. Although the board is the same in each case, these supports can be divided into three groups based on the particular colour, texture, build-up and composition of the ground layers.

– *A lisse* (smooth) primings

The majority of boards examined had been prepared with a smooth ground which was apparently sanded lightly to create an *à lisse* finish.[26] All of the *cartons* purchased from the Pignel-Dupont shop and used in the period early June to mid-July 1886 were prepared in this way (see Table 1).[27] Furthermore, it was possible to sepa-

22 Quotation from Callen 2000, p. 26. The original reads: '[...] les cartons et les forts papiers ne s'emploient guère que pour faire des travaux d'étude, quand on cherche l'économie, ou bien lorsqu'on peint le paysage d'après nature, en rase campagne, et d'une manière ambulante, pour étudier, sans se charger d'un bagage trop pesant et trop embarrassant'.

23 A translucent brown underlayer brushed loosely onto the front of the primed support in the lower region provides further evidence to support this idea. Such a tonal preparation would be quite exceptional for Van Gogh's flower still lifes, but resembles a technique used more often in his landscapes of the period (cats. 64, 65).

24 The very short and bundled nature of the fibres is characteristic for recycled wood pulp or sawdust. Although exact characterisation of the wood species was not possible, fibre morphology suggested a type of softwood. The high lignin content of the wood pulp indicated that it had not been chemically refined. The two sheets that make up the board are pressed rather than glued together, forming so-called pasteless board. For a description of the various board manufacturing techniques, see Bower 2002.

25 Trade catalogues list boards sold in a limited range of standard thickness that usually increased in relation to the size of the supports. The 1840 trade catalogue of Winsor & Newton advertised three choices, for example: ordinary, extra thick and very thick, each in a different range of sizes. See Callen 2000, p. 28.

26 Examination with the stereomicroscope revealed both fine streaks and parallel scratches in the surfaces of the primed supports. Together these indicate that the ground layers had been brushed on and, once dry, lightly abraded.

27 In the case of cat. 67, the Pignel-Dupont label remains on the back of the original picture support, whereas in the other listed examples it was transferred to new backboards applied when the pictures were marouflaged in 1929. No labels are evident on cats. 60 and 69, though these might be hidden by the marouflage backing, or have been irrevocably damaged during attempted transfer.

rate these *cartons* with *à lisse* primings into two distinct groups, according to their pale grey or white colour. This corresponds to the two colours of preparation mentioned in sources. Early in the 19th century the English colourman Roberson & Co. recorded that the surface of French *carton* 'has a face of pale gray or white ground usually of a lead, oil, and calcium carbonate mixture'.[28]

A highly detailed image analytical study of ground samples was conducted to compare the material composition of the grey and white grounds on Van Gogh's paintings.[29] In keeping with Roberson's general description, lead white and calcium carbonate white were revealed as the exclusive ingredients of the white oil grounds. The composition of the pale grey grounds is more elaborate though, with barytes and gypsum replacing or supplementing the calcium carbonate white as fillers in the lead white paint.[30] Furthermore, the grey grounds are toned by slight additions of coloured pigment, chiefly fine ochres and carbon black, and occasionally French ultramarine (cat. 97) that could have been added to counteract the known yellowing tendency of lead white in oil.

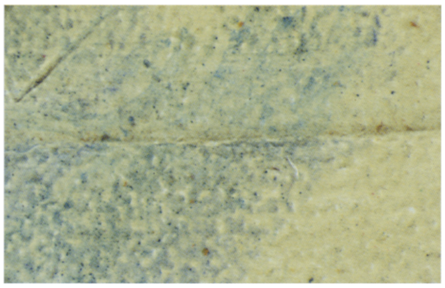
Significantly, a particle of menilite (a magnesium-rich variety of chert, which occurs as a hydrous amorphous silica, or opaline silica) was discovered as an incidental inclusion in the white ground of cat. 57, providing a highly specific marker for the origin of the source materials.[31] Menilite is named after Ménilmontant (now in the 20th arrondissement of Paris), where it is found within the geologically rich area of the Paris basin that covers the area of the Ile-de-France. As Van Gogh's pictures reveal (*The hill of Montmartre with stone quarry*, cats. 64, 65), the region was still an important mining centre in his day, and was renowned as a source of gypsum used in the manufacture of plaster of Paris. This makes it very likely that some of the materials found in these grounds on *carton* derived from the immediate vicinity of Paris, perhaps already coexisting in a particular sediment that was mined, rather than being separate and deliberate additions by the manufacturer.

– *A grain* (textured) primings

The later *Shoes* (cat. 78), painted between January and February 1887, likewise belongs to the group of *cartons* prepared with a white ground of standard lead white and calcium carbonate white formulation, but differs in its lightly speckled surface texture. An X-ray supports the idea that the ground was applied with a roller in this case (rather than brushed on and then smoothed), leaving a characteristic diamond-shaped impression where it was lifted in the corner.[32] Such microscopic tool marks can thus prove useful for distinguishing between different batches of manufactured *cartons* used for pictures of different date, despite the consistent type of *carton* and near-standard ground recipes employed.

Exceptional among the works examined was the *carton* support of Van Gogh's *Self-portrait with straw hat* (cat. 125), painted in August or September 1887. Though the *carton* was again of the standard type, the build-up of the ground is unusual, consisting of a warm buff-coloured layer (with quite similar ingredients to the light grey grounds) applied on top of a lead white one. Again, the top layer seems to have been rolled on to create an *à grain* surface (fig. 8). Although severe fading of organic red paint used for the background and clothing in the portrait has enhanced the

28 Roberson & Co. (1819), see Callen 2000, pp. 27, 28.
29 Beatrice Marino performed secondary ion mass spectrometry (SIMS) mapping studies of ground samples from nine of the works on *carton*, building upon previous results of light microscopy and SEM-EDS analysis of samples conducted by ICN (now RCE) in collaboration with STCA. Her work formed part of the project 'The painting materials and techniques of Vincent van Gogh' undertaken within the De Mayerne Programme, funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). For a full account of Marino's research see her PhD dissertation 2006.
30 The presence of strontium confirms a natural source of origin for the barium sulphate, since this element is lost in the process of making pure, artificial barium sulphate (*blanc fixe*). See Marino *et al.* 2005, and Marino 2006.
31 Marino *et al.* 2005, and Marino 2006.
32 The diamond-shaped impression may suggest that the ends of the roller were chamfered to avoid the formation of a linear pattern. Philippe Huyvaerts, president of the company Claessens Artists' Canvas in Waregem, Belgium, informs us that they use this particular shape of roller, clad with plush velvet, to apply a final coating to the canvases they produce today.





8 *Self-portrait with straw hat* (cat. 125). Enlarged detail showing the rolled *à grain* texture of the priming.

9 *Self-portrait* (cat. 97). Detail of format stamp 0 on the reverse of the tiny *carton* support.

visibility of the priming, its speckled texture and luminosity must always have played a conspicuous role in the finished picture.

Beyond the collection of the Van Gogh Museum, it seems that the artist employed *carton* supports with a similar granular surface for various other portraits made in the spring and summer of 1887: such as *Self-portrait with grey felt hat* (F 295 JH 1211), *Portrait of Alexander Reid* (p. 24, fig. 13) and *Self-portrait* (fig. 97b), of which the latter has the stamp of the G. Hennequin shop (see Table 1).[33] The *à grain* surface of these *cartons* somewhat resembled the textural quality of the thinly primed canvas supports that Van Gogh began to employ from early 1887 on, first for pictures executed in an *à l'essence* technique (cats. 87, 88, for example), and afterwards for *plein-air* views of Asnières (cats. 106, 108, for example). For the latter spring landscapes Van Gogh even used canvases without any ground preparation at all (F 354 JH 1270, for example), and earlier he had used bare wooden panels with a rough surface for two still-life paintings (cats. 81, 82).[34] As argued in 'Developing technique and style', Van Gogh was able to exploit the more explicit texture offered by these new types of support for pictorial effect.[35]

– Standard sizes of manufacture

Microscopic examination of the edges of the *carton* supports that are still intact indicated that the individual boards had been sliced from larger ready-primed sheets, rather than individually prepared.[36] Those sheets had very probably been manufactured in or around Paris, as was reported to be the case from early on in the 19th century.[37] The idea of local manufacture is supported by evidence given for the Paris origins of the priming materials applied. The primed boards were then cut up into pieces that matched the standard *figure* sizes of ready-made canvases sold in the period (figs. 1, 2), ranging from the tiniest ones stamped with the size 0 on their reverse (fig. 9) up to the largest *figure* 8 picture supports. Van Gogh seems to have preferred the squarer *figure* range of formats, although that might just reflect the fact that *carton* was simply not available in the alternative *paysage* or *marine* shapes until late in the century.[38]

Unusually, the pale grey primed *figure* 5 (cats. 61-63, 68) and *figure* 6 (cats. 56, 59) *cartons* obtained from Pignel-Dupont bear their original prices of 50 and 65 centimes respectively (fig. 5). This was roughly 40% of the price of the cheapest ready-made canvases advertised by Tanguy in equivalent formats, and his products were cheaper than most.[39] Nevertheless, Van Gogh still displayed his characteristic thriftiness by recycling one of the *figure* 5 *cartons* by painting over an abandoned picture (cat. 69).

Canvas (Table 3)

By far the majority, 73 of the Antwerp and Paris pictures studied, were painted on canvas. Table 3 presents comparative technical data for all these supports, listing standard features that include: dimensions, features of stretching, fibre and weave

33 For the latter self-portrait see Otterlo 2003, pp. 171-73.

34 With thanks to Kristin Hoermann Lister, paintings conservator at The Art Institute of Chicago, for examining *Fishing in spring, the pont de Clichy (Asnières)* (F 354 JH 1270) under the stereomicroscope and confirming that the picture was executed on unprimed, plain-weave canvas. An automated thread count from the X-radiograph revealed an average of 16.7 vertical and 19.1 horizontal threads per cm, unpublished report compiled by D. Johnson and C. R. Johnson, July 2010. We are grateful to colleagues at AIC for providing us with scans of the X-radiograph.

35 In the same period one can see an opposite trend in the artist's preparation of failed paintings for reuse. From early 1887 on he took greater pains to scrape down rough texture in the first painting, or to cover it up with an even layer of paint in order to provide a smooth surface on which to paint his new composition. This too may be seen to demonstrate a heightened concern for the issue of surface texture, however. See pp. 114-17.

36 For cats. 68, 97, 121 and 122 it appears that the ground layers were sliced through around the edges of the support, rather than running over them as do the figurative brushstrokes on top. The edges of the other *cartons* were all smoothed when the pictures were marouflaged at a later date, removing any such evidence for the technique of manufacture.

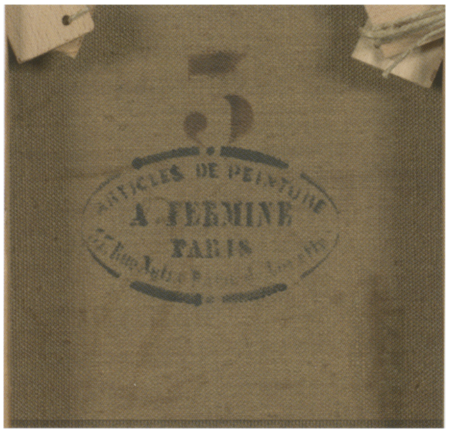
37 In his *Traité complet de la peinture* of 1829 (vol. 9, pp. 133, 134, note 2), Jacques-Nicholas Paillot de Montabert records that: 'In the direction of Luxembourg there is a manufactory producing carton in very large dimensions. In or near Paris it is made in the *grand-aigle* paper size' ('Il existe, du côté de Luxembourg, une manufacture de cartons, d'une tris-grande dimension. A Paris, ou près Paris, on en fabrique de la grandeur du papier grand-aigle'). The *grand-aigle* paper size corresponded to 105 x 75 cm. Paillot does not say whether or not the *carton* was manufactured ready-primed, but ready-primed *carton* was offered for sale in early catalogues of French colour merchants, such as the Lefranc catalogue of c. 1850; see Callen 2000, p. 28.

38 Callen 2000, p. 29. Evert van Uitert, kindly pointed out a practical advantage of the *figure* format boards, namely that their relatively square shape afforded greater rigidity compared to the more oblong *paysage* and *marine* formats.

39 The two *figure* 8 supports of cats. 57 and 58, both with white grounds, were left unpriced. The cheapest *ordinaire* grade canvases listed by Tanguy in *figure* 5 and *figure* 6 format cost 75 and 90 centimes respectively (fig. 1). In the same period, Lefranc & Cie listed equivalent canvases for 90 and 100 centimes (fig. 2).



10 *Self-portrait* (cat. 52). Reverse showing the canvas still mounted on its original strainer, with a (*paysage*) format 3 stamp on the left side. Smudged fingerprints from the artist are also evident.



11 *Portrait of Agostina Segatori* (cat. 83). Detail of A. Fermine trade stamp and a (*figure*) format 3 stamp on the reverse of the original canvas.

characteristics, any original trade or format stamps evident, and the build-up and composition of priming layers. Bearing in mind that this does not cover his entire oeuvre, characteristic patterns emerged in the data compiled, helping to illuminate Van Gogh's preferences in the period and to compare these with the broader practices of painters at the time.[40]

Format

– Available options

In Van Gogh's day, commercially primed canvases could be bought ready-stretched on standard-sized wooden frames, either fixed strainers or more expensive stretchers that could be enlarged by tapping out keys in the corners. The three basic rectangular shapes available in France were known as *figure* or *portrait*, *paysage* (landscape) and *marine*. For each numbered size, the three shapes would have one dimension the same, but the other would differ, *figure* being the widest and *marine* the narrowest (fig. 2). The exact sizes sold by different retailers could vary slightly, however, with Lefranc & C[ie] offering an extended range compared to Bourgeois Aîné, for example. For this reason, the formats of Van Gogh's picture supports listed in Table 3 are matched to the ranges offered by both these companies.

Alternatively, painters might prefer to buy prepared canvas by the roll, together with bare stretchers, combining these themselves to provide cheaper picture supports. Finally, canvases might be custom prepared by the colourman, or even primed by the artist, rather than off-the-shelf types. In both these instances, painters were no longer bound to the standard commercial sizes on offer. From the 1880s, with the introduction of mitred 'universal' stretchers with interchangeable members, one possibility was to compose stretchers of non-standard format by varying the combination of bars of fixed length. Alternatively, stretching frames of any desired format could be made to order.

Technical study of Van Gogh's Antwerp and Paris pictures in the Van Gogh Museum collection provided alternating evidence for all these practices, though with a clear preference for the purchase of ready-made canvases in standard formats.

– Van Gogh's preference for standard sizes

As mentioned, Van Gogh's departure from Holland proved pivotal for his switch to the use of ready-made canvas supports in the range of standard French sizes, and that became his usual practice in Paris. Three of the six Antwerp canvases examined, and 54 of the 67 Paris ones, showed dimensions that were close enough to be considered a standard format (see the criteria outlined in Table 3). Very occasionally, this was confirmed by standard size numbers that had been stamped by the retailer or manufacturer onto the original strainer (cat. 52 and fig. 10), stretcher (cat. 95), or the backs of the canvases (cats. 83, 86, 88, 91 and fig. 11). Two original, commercial format strainers (cats. 53, 54) and two stretchers (cats. 77, 87) without size stamps have also survived.[41] Unfortunately, though, such evidence was lost when most pictures were lined in the 20th century, covering up the backs of the canvases and replacing the original stretching frames.

Table 4 reviews the standard sizes of the canvases that Van Gogh used for the Paris pictures examined, revealing a practice that was quite normal for the period.

40 Contextual information is especially drawn from Callen 2000, who discusses the role of the picture support at length. Some of the findings on Van Gogh presented here have been published in Hendriks/ Geldof 2005.

41 The only other original stretcher encountered, belonging to cat. 133, is of a non-standard format.

In summary, it seems that his favourite option was the squarer *figure* or *portrait* format (30 of the 54 canvases examined). Ranging from sizes 3 to 40, his most common choice was a *figure* 8 format, followed equally by *figure* 10 and *figure* 6 supports. He less often used canvases of the *paysage* format (23 examples), in the size range 3-20. What is striking is that only one standard *marine* canvas was used – corresponding to a horizontal *basse marine* 6 format turned upright for the narrow still life, *Flame nettle in a flowerpot* (cat. 67) – since Van Gogh preferred to use long canvases of non-standard format instead (see below).

– Relation between standard sizes and subject-matter

Like other painters, Van Gogh seems to have ignored trade-designated subject categories when using his standard-sized picture supports. Thus of the 30 *figure* canvases, only 9 were actually used for portraits, whereas 13 were used for landscapes and 8 for still lifes. Of the 23 *paysage* canvases, only 5 were indeed used for landscapes whereas 11 were used for still lifes and 7 for portraits. However, when counting these examples, one needs to take into account that the present picture often covers up an abandoned one that may have been of another subject. Twenty-five canvases, that is almost one third of the 67 considered, seem to have been recycled in this way (see pp. 112-17).

As one might expect, there is a general correlation between size and ambition in the pictures examined. Small canvases tended to be used for informal studies, whereas larger canvases (*paysage* 12 and above) were often used for more highly worked pictures that had been brought to completion in several sessions in the studio (cats. 66, 71, 128, 135-37, for example). Some of these more ambitious pieces are signed, confirming that they were deemed worthy of sale or exchange (cats. 71, 134, 137), and in one case inscribed with a dedication to Vincent's brother Theo as well (cat. 128). Neither of these features apply to the largest canvas examined however, the *figure* 40 *Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette* (cat. 115), which is both unsigned and executed in a loose *alla prima* style. A rough preliminary sketch made with the aid of a perspective frame in the right foreground area indicates that this landscape was drawn *in situ*, while the rapid, wet-into-wet brushwork throughout suggests that it was painted on the spot too. Apparently Van Gogh had carried this sizeable canvas (81 x 100 cm) with him to the nearby location in Montmartre.[42]

– Non-standard, broad formats

Van Gogh could easily have turned to the use of ready-made, *marine* canvases for his *plein-air* views of Montmartre that were painted in wider than *paysage* format. Yet he seems to have looked for other solutions instead in the works examined. One option was to cut down an abandoned picture to the required size, in order to reuse the canvas. An example of this is *Sunset in Montmartre* (cat. 91), where he recycled a *figure* 10 canvas of appropriate width, cut roughly across the middle to provide a shorter than *marine* 8 format. Evidence for this procedure is provided by the cropped edge of the first picture turned over the bottom of the stretcher. Also a size 10 stamp is still visible on the back of the canvas, but located above the middle of the bottom edge, rather than centred as it would initially have been on the pre-stretched *figure* 10 support.

42 Examination showed that the canvas had both been primed and painted on a *figure* 40 frame. There was no evidence to suggest that the canvas had been taken off its stretcher and carried rolled up, or that the loose canvas had been pinned onto a flat surface when it was painted, for example.

For two other Montmartre landscapes painted in shorter than *marine* format, *Impasse des Deux Frères* (cat. 92) and *Montmartre: windmills and allotments* (cat. 93), Van Gogh recycled earlier pictures that were already of suitable shape. Both landscapes are thought to be painted over tall compositions depicting flowers in a vase, so that the artist simply turned the canvases horizontal for reuse.[43] Though deviating from the standard French proportions (height by width dimensions), the stretchers could still have been composed of interchangeable bars of standard commercial lengths.[44] For the slightly later, large canvas *Garden with courting couples: Square Saint-Pierre* (cat. 104) however, which is closer to a *marine* format (size 50) than the examples discussed above, only the width dimension could have been achieved with a standard bar size.[45] This might indicate that the stretching frame was custom-made for this ambitious work, which was painted on a good-quality canvas weave and brought to completion in several sessions in the studio.[46]

– Economic and pictorial advantages of non-standard, broad formats

Perhaps these elongated supports that could be tailor-made by combining standard length stretcher-bars with loose canvas, provided a cheaper alternative to off-the-shelf canvases supplied in standard *marine* format. Advertisements reveal that *marine* canvases were relatively expensive, costing the same as larger *figure* or *paysage* ones in the same standard size number (fig. 2). Other market forces may also have played a role in Van Gogh's choice, for although advertised in trade catalogues, *marine* canvases are likely to have been less in demand and hence less readily available than the staple *figure* and *paysage* formats. Furthermore, in late July 1887, Van Gogh wrote that large and long canvases used for landscapes proved difficult to sell [572], but perhaps not too much should be read into this comment, since it was a more general complaint of his at the time.

With characteristic pragmatism, Van Gogh managed to combine economic with pictorial considerations in his choice of wider than standard format canvases for these works, which closely anticipate the proportions of the double square canvases that he came to favour for some of his very last landscapes.[47] In *Impasse des Deux Frères* (cat. 92) and *Montmartre: windmills and allotments* (cat. 93), the broad format of the picture supports is deliberately played out in the splayed perspectives of the scenes depicted. In *Montmartre: windmills and allotments* (cat. 93) the landscape was constructed in a rather straightforward way, with steep orthogonals converging towards a central vanishing point on the horizon, according to a single 'railway track' perspective. On the other hand, infrared reflectography of *Impasse des Deux Frères* (cat. 92) reveals that the composition was drawn using two split vanishing points, enhancing the wide-angle effect of the foreground area (see p. 122). In the case of *Garden with courting couples: Square Saint-Pierre* (cat. 104), where perspective plays no role in the flat design of the composition, the horizontal proportions of the canvas serve to emphasise its decorative, frieze-like character instead.

– Other canvases of a non-standard format

Ten other 'Paris' works of a non-standard format are in fact painted on the front (cats. 99-101, 129, Table 3.4) or back (cats. 114, 116-20, Table 3.7) of Nuenen studies, reusing the canvas supports. All of these pictures lack tacking margins that were

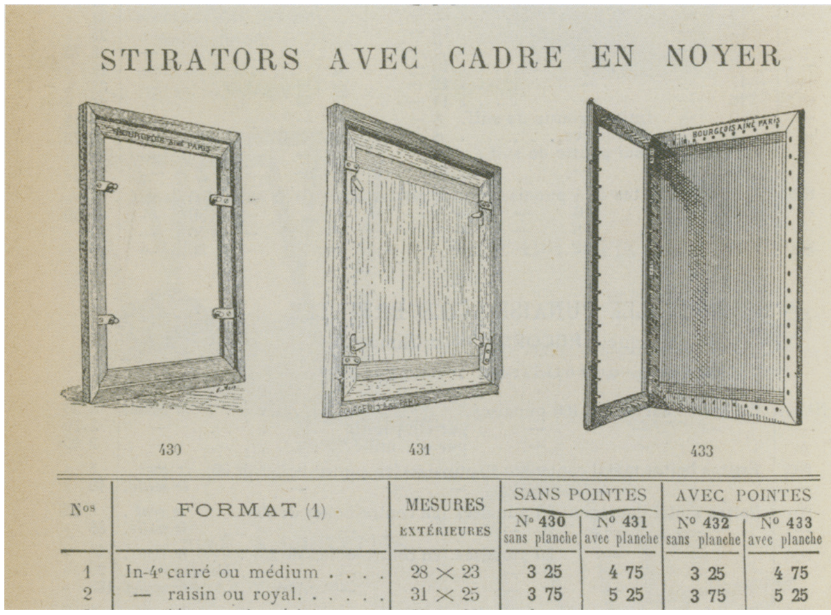
43 The underlying compositions could not be revealed by the technical examination methods applied. However, it is thought that they are most likely failed attempts in the series of flower still lifes painted in the summer of 1886, several of which were executed on tall and narrow canvases of non-standard format. For example, *Vase with gladioli and carnations* (F 237 JH 1131), is listed in De la Faille 1970 as having exactly the same dimensions as *Impasse des Deux Frères* (cat. 92). The thinly woven canvases used for both cats. 92 and 93 suggest a poor-quality fabric that up to now has only been found in Van Gogh's pictures from his Paris period. Furthermore, the detection of genuine Naples yellow in the composition underlying *Montmartre: windmills and allotments* (cat. 93) is consistent with a date in the summer of 1886, since the pigment seems to have disappeared from the artist's palette after then. Cadmium yellow was also used, a colour identified in two flower still lifes of the summer of 1886 (cats. 70, 71). See further Table 5.

44 In the case of cat. 92, which now measures 35.0 x 65.3 cm, fixed stretcher-bar sizes 5 (35 cm) and 15 (65 cm) could have been used for the height and width dimensions respectively. For cat. 93, now measuring 45.2 x 81.3 cm, fixed stretcher-bar sizes 8 (46 cm) and 25 (81 cm) may have been employed.

45 The current width of the stretcher (112.7 cm) closely corresponds to the fixed 113.4 cm length stretcher bar used for a *figure* size 80 and *haute paysage* sizes 100 and 120. However, there is no fixed stretcher bar length equivalent to the 75.0 cm height of the picture.

46 Since the canvas has been reused twice, it is not known for certain that it was intended to be used for the current landscape from the start. Each time a new double ground layer was applied, covering up paint layers that must either have belonged to failed attempts of the current subject or to different subject matter altogether.

47 Examples of the use of this double square format (approximately 50 x 100 cm) in the Van Gogh Museum collection include *Wheatfield under troubled skies* (F 778 JH 2097), *Wheatfield with crows* (F 779 JH 2117) and *Tree roots* (F 816 JH 2113).


STIRATORS AVEC CADRE EN NOYER

Nos	FORMAT (1)	MESURES EXTÉRIEURES	SANS POINTES N° 430 sans planche	SANS POINTES N° 431 avec planche	AVEC POINTES N° 432 sans planche	AVEC POINTES N° 433 avec planche
1	In-4° carré ou médium	28 × 23	3 25	4 75	3 25	4 75
2	— raisin ou royal.	31 × 25	3 75	5 25	3 75	5 25

12 *Stirator*, advertised in the 1906 trade catalogue of the firm Bourgeois Aîné.

folded over the sides of a stretching frame. Instead, telltale holes around the edges show that the canvases had been held flat, pinned onto a frame or board during the painting process. Notably, two of the Paris verso works were not painted right up to the edge, but show borders of primed canvas left bare (cats. 114, 117). When these pictures were made, a frame must have covered their edges. Perhaps the loose canvases were held for painting in a wooden frame clamp, of the type advertised as *stirators* in trade catalogues of the period (fig. 12). In any event it seems that the same device was used for both works, since although it slipped askew in cat. 117, the picture areas outlined by the frame window match exactly.

A last painting in this category of canvases that were painted flat, rather than with edges turned over the sides of a stretching frame, is the small, late-1887 study of *Sunflowers gone to seed* (cat. 124, Table 3.8). In this case we can be confident that it was Van Gogh who manufactured the makeshift support, using a small scrap of cotton fabric cut to a rough *figure* 3 shape from the selvedge of a roll, which he consequently primed himself too. Matching support materials were used for the large *Courtesan: after Eisen*, mounted on a non-standard format stretcher stamped by the firm Tasset et L'Hôte (cat. 133, Table 3.8); see pp. 109-11 and fig. 3 on p. 95.

Fabrics and weaves

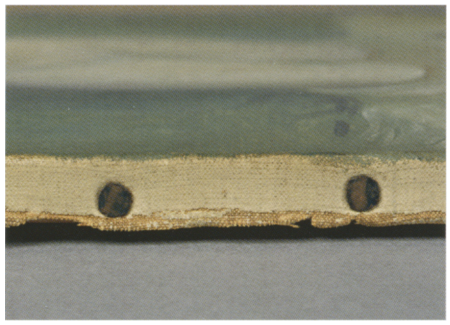
– Linen and cotton fabrics

The staple fabric for artists' canvas was linen, though alternatives such as cotton or hemp might be specified in trade catalogues. Selective analysis confirmed that linen was indeed the usual fibre in Van Gogh's canvases, though a matching cotton fabric was used for three pictures painted in late 1887 (cats. 124, 130, 133, Table 3.8).

– Weave patterns

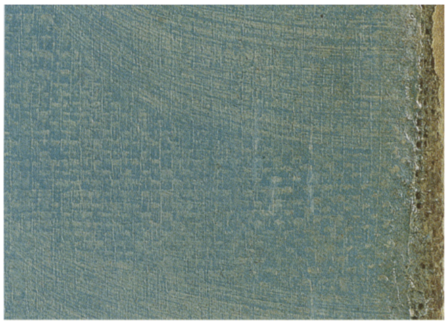
The standard weave for artists' canvas was a simple, tabby weave, but other types were sold in the late 19th century. Though not advertised commercially, basket-weave canvases are also known to have been prepared as off-the-shelf supports, and various types of twill were available too. A survey of the fabric weaves employed by Van Gogh revealed a normal selection for the period. Virtually all of the 73 canvases examined were of simple tabby weave. Only three were painted on a matching pre-primed twill (cats. 135-37, Table 3.6), and none on basket-weave canvas.





13 *Portrait of Agostina Segatori* (cat. 83). Enlarged detail of the back of the canvas, showing the poor, presumably *étude* or *ordinaire étude* quality weave.

14 *Plaster cast of a woman's torso* (cat. 87). Detail of whitish ground extending over the tacking margin, indicating that the canvas was primed before it was mounted onto the current, original stretcher.



15 *Plaster cast of a woman's torso* (cat. 86). Detail of the edge of the painting, where the paint and ground layers terminate. The fact that the ground layer does not extend over the tacking margin indicates that the canvas was mounted on the working frame before it was primed.

– Range of weave densities

Prepared canvas was sold in a broad selection of weights and weave densities that ranged from as little as 11 up to more than 30 threads per cm. The different qualities advertised ranged from the cheapest *étude* grade, characterised by its thin skeletal weave, through the somewhat better *ordinaire* quality, right up to the *très-fine* and *extra fine* weaves. In Paris, Van Gogh seems to have exploited the full scope on offer.

At the bottom end of the range, for 30 pictures he used canvases with only 11.5-13.5 thin threads per cm, selectively identified as linen (fig. 13). Comparison with sales book samples of artists' canvas suggests that this gauze-like cloth was probably equivalent to a low *étude* or *ordinaire étude* grade.[48] One example is the canvas purchased from the firm of Hardy-Alan and used for *Still life with cornflowers, daisies, poppies and white carnations* (F 324 JH 1293) in the summer of 1886 (see Table 1).[49] So far this quality of fabric has only been found in Van Gogh's Paris pictures and seems to be characteristic for the period.[50] He often used this poor grade of canvas weave – even for larger ambitious works, such as *View of Paris* (cat. 66) and *Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette* (cat. 115) – although he later expressed a general concern that his thin canvases would deteriorate in time and that they could not hold a lot of impasto [800]. Visual inspection suggests that since the thin fibres were readily encapsulated by the ground, this type of cloth could sometimes provide a rather bland surface quality.

At the top end of the range were six pictures painted in 1887 on tightly woven linen fabrics with 19-30 threads per cm. The finest of these was probably equivalent to the *extra fine* grade advertised in trade catalogues of the period. Only the cotton fabrics he used in late 1887 showed even higher thread counts, with around 36 warp threads per cm. This might be the cheap and closely woven type of cotton advertised as *madapolam*, sold for use with pastel, or even ready prepared for oil painting.[51] As discussed below, these finely woven fabrics were exploited in conjunction with thin and absorbent priming layers, offering a porous substrate with a subtly corrugated surface texture.

Distinguishing different types of priming

There were two main procedures for the preparation of artists' canvas in Van Gogh's day. One involved priming canvas stretched on large frames, which in commercial practice traditionally measured around 10 x 2 square metres.[52] Once dry, the strips of prepared canvas could be cut up to make individual picture supports. Alternatively, a piece of canvas was first cut to size, then individually stretched and primed on the working-size frame. A physical distinction may still be made between the two types of support, since in the first case the priming layers covered the entire support including the tacking margins (fig. 14), whereas in the second they covered the picture area only (fig. 15). Though not a hard-and-fast rule, this

48 I am grateful to Anthea Callen for supplying a scale image of a post-1906 sample of ready-primed *ordinaire étude* canvas from the firm Bourgeois Aîné (illustrated in Callen 2000, p. 35, fig. 56) for visual comparison with Van Gogh's canvases, providing a close match. The quality of *ordinaire* and *étude* canvas was reported to sometimes overlap in this period.
49 A photograph of *Still life with cornflowers, poppies and white carnations* kept at the Van Gogh Museum records the Hardy-Alan stamp on the back of the canvas when it was still on its original strainer, before the picture was lined and the strainer replaced. The canvas is woven with around 12 warp and weft threads per cm.
50 Though the *figure* 8 canvas used for the Antwerp *Portrait of a prostitute* (cat. 47) shows a comparably low thread count averaging 11.8 (± 0.7) threads in the warp and weft directions, better quality, thicker thread was used to produce a tighter weave. See Table 3.3, no. 4.
51 Callen 2000, pp. 30-32.
52 On the traditional methods of priming canvas as still practised in Belgium today see Carlyle/Hendriks 2009.

difference is one of the features that can help to distinguish canvas prepared on rolls by the larger-scale manufacturer from canvases individually prepared by the colourman or artist.

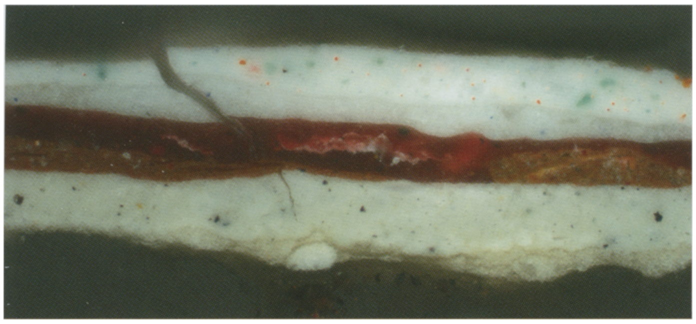
Both canvas from rolls and precut canvas was sold with many different types of ground preparation that varied in colour, surface texture, and absorbency. The choice of a particular type might have vital consequences for the artist's working procedure, influencing the look of the finished picture. For example, a more absorbent surface would wick out binding medium from the colours applied on top, causing them to dry more quickly and limiting the time that paint could be easily spread. Moreover, the absorbency of the ground was thought to influence the brilliance and permanence of colours applied on top.[53] The exact properties of a ground could be manipulated according to the composition and build-up of its layers. Very broadly speaking, absorbent grounds were essentially distemper layers that consisted of calcium carbonate or another white inert material bound in an aqueous medium, usually animal glue. Non-absorbent grounds on the other hand, were based on lead white in an oil medium. However, hybrid forms with intermediate properties could be created by changing the combination of these basic ingredients applied in one or more layers of varying thickness.[54]

In order to investigate Van Gogh's choices in a comprehensive way, detailed comparative microscopy and analysis of ground sample cross-sections was performed for all but one of the Antwerp and Paris canvases investigated.[55] Features examined included the number of ground layers, the thickness of layers, the shape, size and chemical composition of pigment particles, and the relative amounts in which they are present.[56] Occasionally it was possible to analyse the binding medium too.[57] Besides the microscopic features of paint samples, we also took into account visual evidence of colour and the way in which the grounds had been applied on the paintings. Together this enabled us to distinguish several clusters among the canvas supports used by Van Gogh in the period.

– Lead white-based commercial grounds

By far the biggest group of canvases to emerge (58) were those prepared with primings based on lead white.[58] Within this group, two of the canvases bought in Antwerp (cats. 48, 50) and thirty-four Paris ones seemed to be ready-manufactured canvases that were primed before they were cut to size. On the other hand, one Antwerp (cat. 47) and fourteen Paris canvases with this type of ground had been precut and individually prepared, suggesting the smaller-scale practice of a colourman or, less probably, Van Gogh himself.[59] It seems, then, that his usual practice

53 Carlyle 2001, p. 168.
54 On absorbent grounds see Callen 2000, pp. 52-57, and Carlyle 2001, pp. 166-69. On oil grounds see Callen 2000, pp. 57-61, and Carlyle 2001, pp. 171, 172. As one might expect, trade nomenclature was rather inconsistent, so the designation 'absorbent ground' could cover different types. Moreover, it is often unclear how the varieties named in sources correspond to the priming systems determined by the examination of actual paintings.
55 The exception was cat. 102 (see Table 3.1), since none of the available samples include a first ground layer. Samples show that the still life is painted on top of a failed composition that was scraped down, probably removing ground paint too.
56 Usually a semi-quantitative assessment was made for the ratio of ingredients in samples, based on the light microscopy of samples and the relative height of peaks in the SEM-EDS spectra. A more accurate estimate of the proportions of ingredients present in a select number of ground samples was made by Ralph Haswell at Shell, using software that had been calibrated against known standards to quantify EDS spectra: see Carlyle 2005, pp. 91, 92, and Haswell/Carlyle 2006. Focusing on a set of ground samples from Van Gogh's paintings on *carton*, Beatrice Marino has developed new criteria for a precise characterisation and comparison of sample cross-sections. Her approach involves the use of SIMS mapping data combined with quantifying software to perform a statistical classification of samples based on their chemical composition, colour and texture characterised by particle size distribution. See Marino 2006, Marino *et al.* 2005 I and Marino *et al.* 2005 II, vol. 1, pp. 814-23.
57 Though some variation of these features is to be expected between samples, depending on their exact spot of origin, in fact multiple samples from the same painting showed rather consistent properties, pointing to a standard formulation and uniform system of application for the ground across the picture area. One exception was cat. 76, where the two available samples (taken from the edge of the primed picture area) left it unclear whether the ground consists of one or two layers. See note 67.
58 This total does not include several Paris works painted on canvases with lead white-based grounds that are thought to have been manufactured in Nuenen rather than Paris, among them the four reused canvases without tacking margins from the Nuenen period which seem never to have been stretched on frames (cats. 99-101, 129), as well as three Antwerp pictures painted on canvas that was sent on from Nuenen (cats. 45, 49 and probably 46).
59 Exceptionally, in the case of cat. 86, a commercial application is confirmed by the presence of a format stamp (6) on the reverse of the canvas. However, the general assertion that the individually prepared canvases were more likely professionally primed by the colourman than by Van Gogh is based on the following observations. Surviving edges show that the canvases were tacked at regular intervals, whereas paint samples revealed two canvases prepared with size tinted with warm-coloured pigment (cats. 73, 113 and note 95). Furthermore the grounds were uniformly applied, and in five instances were built up in separate layers of different composition that were allowed to dry in between (cats. 47, 64, 86, 109, 113). These physical characteristics agree with what we know of commercial priming systems and seem to fit less well with the more idiosyncratic features of the canvases with intermediate ground layers and ground layers that can be definitely attributed to Van Gogh.



16 *Impasse des Deux Frères* (cat. 92). Paint cross-section from the bottom turnover crease, showing a lead white on thin calcium carbonate white ground. The first ground layer, which is roughly 0.02 mm thick, contains calcium carbonate white only. The layer on top, which is approx. 0.06 mm thick, contains lead white, a little barium sulphate, gypsum, silicates, carbon black and ochreous particles. On top of the original ground are two red paint layers from an abandoned composition. Van Gogh covered this up with a cool white layer consisting of lead white, zinc white, and a little ultramarine. He used exactly the same paint to cover up two other pictures for reuse (cats. 93, 95). The uppermost layer in the sample is from the sandy path in the foreground of the current landscape.

was to purchase ready-made canvases off the shelf. Although samples revealed an endless variety in the exact build-up and composition of these lead white-based grounds, it proved possible to classify them according to three main types.

– Lead white on thin, calcium carbonate white grounds (Table 3.3) (fig. 16)
The first type of ground consists of a layer of lead white in oil on top of a calcium carbonate white one, presumably bound with animal glue.[60] The proteinaceous medium found in the first calcium carbonate ground layer of the unlined cat. 92 is consistent with this idea.[61] The first ground layer may be very thin, and is always much thinner than the lead white layer on top. The latter often contains barium sulphate and/or gypsum filler, with traces of coloured pigment (ochres, fine carbon black, and umber) providing the required tint. It should be noted that to distinguish this particular ground from a simple lead white one (Table 3.5) may not be straightforward, since it depends upon having a complete sample that includes the first thin layer of calcium carbonate white.

This particular sort of double white ground was found on ten Paris works, yet the fact that it also occurs on an Antwerp canvas (cat. 47) means that it cannot be considered exclusive to the period. Eight of these eleven examples involved canvases of *étude* quality, so the first layer of calcium carbonate white in glue must have provided a relatively cheap and faster drying material to fill the particularly open pores of the fabric compared to the lead white in oil paint used on top.[62]

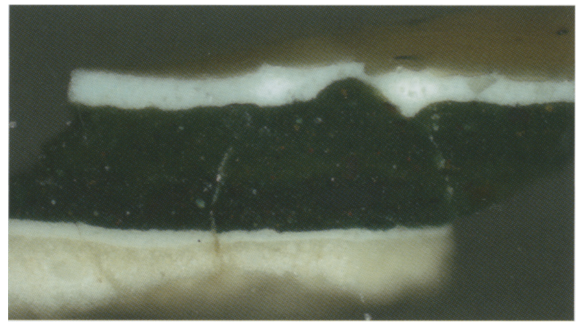
– Lead white and calcium carbonate white on thicker calcium carbonate white and lead white grounds (Table 3.4) (fig. 17)
A second type of ground consists of a layer of lead white commonly mixed with a little calcium carbonate white, on a layer of calcium carbonate white mixed with a little lead white.[63] Unlike the first type of priming described, here the first ground is thicker than the lead white-based one on top, which might have a slight addition of zinc white too.[64] An oil medium was identified in a sample containing both ground layers from the unlined cat. 45.[65]

This type of ground was very rare in the 67 Paris pictures investigated, being found in only two works dated to 1887 (cats. 108, 134). It was also identified in two paintings belonging to the small group made in Antwerp (cats. 46, 50), as well as in four Paris pictures thought to be painted over Nuenen studies of peasant heads (cats. 99-101, 129), so it can be said that this type of priming occurs on canvases of Antwerp and Nuenen origin, but seems very unusual for canvases bought in Paris.[66]

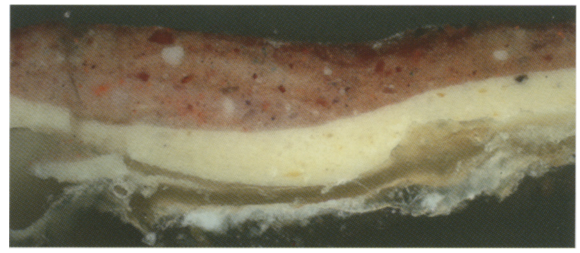
– Lead white-based grounds (Table 3.5) (fig. 18)
By far the most common type of priming encountered in the Paris works examined was a simple, lead white-based oil ground. An oil medium was confirmed by analy-

60 On the use of the term calcium carbonate white see the explanation preceding Table 3, under *Priming layers.* In the case of cat. 110 the source of calcium carbonate was specifically identified as chalk by the presence of fossil coccoliths visible in a back-scattered electron image of the first ground.
61 Protein was indicated by a positive staining test using Amido Black 2. See Table 3 for details of the method employed.
62 Replicating the procedure of applying a calcium carbonate in glue layer to a canvas of comparably open weave demonstrated that the mixture was surprisingly economical in use too. There was no evidence for wastage in the form of beads of ground squeezed through the weave interstices to the back of the canvas during the process of application, regardless of whether the canvas had been sized with liquid or gelled glue, or even left unsized. See Carlyle 2005, p. 111.
63 It is not certain whether the calcium carbonate white in the top layer is present as a deliberate addition or as an adulterant in a cheaper grade of manufactured lead white.
64 While two pictures painted in Antwerp but on Nuenen canvas (cats. 45, 49) also show this double ground structure, they differ in that the top layer contains lead white only, with no additions of calcium carbonate white or zinc white.
65 Binding medium analysis was performed using FTIR.
66 Ongoing analytical studies of the grounds found on Van Gogh's Nuenen-period paintings undertaken at the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE) has revealed this particular type of double ground more often, under F 41 JH 513, F 44 JH 962, F 61r JH 533, F 69 JH 724, F 74 JH 648, F 83 JH 777, F 107 JH 933, F 122 JH 522, F 147 JH 891 and F 160 JH 722 among others.

17 *Skull* (cat. 99). Paint cross-section from the upper edge. The bottom of the sample shows the lead white and calcium carbonate white on thicker calcium carbonate white and lead white ground belonging to the underlying composition. The first ground layer, which is approx. 0.09 mm thick, contains calcium carbonate white and a little lead white, and the layer on top, which is approx. 0.025 mm thick, contains lead white, a little calcium carbonate white, and possibly a little zinc white. The thick greenish paint layers on top of the ground contain pigments characteristic of Van Gogh's Nuenen and early Antwerp period, including different shades of ochre, umber, Naples yellow, lead white and zinc white. The uppermost layer in the sample is the ground layer for the current composition, containing lead white, a little barium sulphate and zinc white, as well as the unusual pigment, bone white.



18 *Vase with Chinese asters and gladioli* (cat. 71). Paint cross-section showing a lead white-based ground approx. 0.06 mm thick containing lead white, a little orange ochre, umber, aluminium silicates and china clay, with glue size underneath. The pinkish red paint layers on top are from the background of the still life, and contain variable mixtures of cerulean blue, lead white and zinc white, with four different types of red pigment: vermilion, red ochre, an organic purplish red on a substrate containing calcium, and Kopp's purpurin on a substrate containing aluminium. By skilfully manipulating the mixture of these ingredients, Van Gogh created brushstrokes of varying translucency and tint.



sis of samples from two unlined pictures, cats. 51 and 76.[67] Though this type of ground might also consist of multiple layers, they are of matching or similar composition, with lead white always present as the main ingredient.[68] Barium sulphate, calcium carbonate white and gypsum might be present as extenders, commonly with traces of the same toning pigments found in the first category of lead white on calcium carbonate white grounds.[69]

Based on this limited survey, a "simple" lead white-based ground may be considered typical but not exclusive for the Paris period, since it was found on an Antwerp canvas too (cat. 48). Exceptionally, *View of Paris* (cat. 66) showed zinc white mixed into the lead white ground, which is thought to be the cause of the marked stress cracks that have formed in the brittle paint film, with poorly adhered layers on top.[70]

– Lead white ground type as evidence for the provenance of Van Gogh's canvases
In conclusion, this initial survey suggests that the type of lead white priming could be a useful indicator for the provenance of the canvas when considered together with other forms of evidence. Hence a lead white and calcium carbonate white on a thicker, calcium carbonate white and lead white ground was found on both the Antwerp and the recycled Nuenen canvases investigated, but was very rare for Paris (found only twice). Instead, the majority of Paris canvases showed a simple lead white-based oil ground, though lead white on thin, calcium carbonate white grounds also occurred, most often in combination with poor-quality, gauze-like canvases that, up to now, seem specific for the period (see p. 104 above). These observations will be tested as more comparative information becomes available.

67 The oil medium was identified using FTIR. Although cat. 76 is classified here according to a lead white-based ground, it is anomalous among the paintings examined. One of the two available paint samples showed an uneven calcium carbonate white layer present *on top* of the lead white ground, possibly a second (local?) ground applied by the artist when he reused the canvas. Further research is required to clarify this point.

68 It should be remembered that in the traditional commercial preparation of canvas stretched on large frames, unavoidable overlaps occurred when moving across the canvas from one primed section to the next. Hence, where multiple, wet-into-wet layers occur in a particular ground sample, this might simply reflect such a region of overlap rather than a consistent build-up across the entire surface of the canvas. This fact was kindly pointed out by Philippe Huyvaert, president of the company Claessens Artists' Canvas in Waregem, Belgium, where canvas is still hand-prepared by this traditional method today. See Carlyle/Hendriks 2009. Equally, where ground layers *were* applied wet-into-wet over larger areas, these successive applications might not show up in paint cross-sections due to the fact that the layers fused, rather than leaving a distinct boundary in between.

69 Aluminium silicates were often detected too, though based on the SEM-EDS analysis of samples performed it is uncertain whether these are present in the form of pipe clay (the natural hydrated silicate of aluminium, otherwise known as china clay or kaolin).

70 The brittleness of paint films consisting of zinc white in oil was a known problem. In *The chemistry of paints and painting*, London 1890, Sir Arthur Herbert Church wrote of using zinc white in oil that: 'When used freely, it often shows a tendency to crack and scale'. See Carlyle 2001, p. 517. Similar defects are often observed in the lead white with zinc white grounds that Van Gogh applied to cover up failed compositions in order to reuse the picture supports (see p. 115).

– Reconstructing Van Gogh's patterns of purchase

Tables 3.3-3.5 classify Van Gogh's ready-prepared canvases according to one of the three standard types of commercial priming described above. For each group of pictures with the same type of priming, the canvases are listed in sequence of increasing thread count. This helps to identify paintings made on identical supports, in terms of both the canvas weave and priming layers applied. However, bearing in mind that this survey does not cover Van Gogh's entire Paris oeuvre, it is striking that so far not a single match was found among the commercially prepared canvases with lead white-based grounds purchased there. Together with the documentary evidence provided by canvas stamps, this again points to the fact that his usual practice at the time was to buy ready-made canvases individually from various colourmen in Montmartre, rather than stocking batches of one type in the studio, or using canvas purchased on the roll to manufacture several matching supports. Instead the endlessly diverse characteristics of his ready-primed canvases must reflect the broad commercial range on offer in this artistic quarter. This sets his method apart from both earlier and later periods of his career, when he is known to have assembled his own picture supports from loose canvas combined with bare stretching frames, when he also apparently opted for a more consistent quality of canvas.[71]

Although a full technical survey of his Paris oeuvre is required to substantiate this claim, it is backed by the evidence of Van Gogh's correspondence to Theo after leaving Paris. In April 1888, having settled in the provincial city of Arles, it seems that he found it difficult to obtain the canvas he required from a local source [593]. Consequently he began examining the alternative of ordering loose stretchers and ready-primed canvas by the metre from different Paris suppliers (Tasset, Edouard and Bourgeois), and apparently looked into this option for the first time [625, 631, 635, 638, 639]. The changed logistics of his situation clearly prompted him to look for new solutions, with canvas sent by the roll now proving a cheaper, practicable option. Furthermore, his practice of removing finished pictures from their stretcher in order to roll them up and mail them to Theo in Paris [625], meant that the stretching frames could be reused, adding to the economy of his procedure.

– Unusual types of ground

Examinations revealed that from the early months of 1887 on Van Gogh began exploring the use of alternative types of primed canvas instead of the standard, off-the-shelf types that he had generally used (see pp. 105-08). In each case these canvases had been individually prepared and stretched for use by the artist or colourman in accordance with a relatively simple procedure. Examinations revealed that the fabric supports were often finely woven, with no detectable size layer,[72] and all were coated in a single, thin application of paint that might contain just one pigment (lead white without extenders, chalk, calcium carbonate, or barytes respectively). For three pictures (cats. 106, 131, 132), the raw nubs of the canvas weave were left exposed at the picture surface, further enhancing the absorbency of the thinly primed and apparently unsized substrates. Each of these unusual types of support is described separately below.

In two instances the primed canvases had been used for failed pictures that were subsequently overpainted with woodland views in the period May to July 1887 (cats.

71 For his practice in Nuenen see Paintings 1, pp. 21, 22. Examination of Nuenen paintings has shown that the canvas used was of a fairly consistent type, with thread counts generally in the range of 13-14 x 14-16 threads per cm. This general finding still holds, though thread counts were not subjected to the more accurate methods of statistical comparison, and most recently computer analysis, employed now. Several publications address the physical characteristics of the Tasset et L'Hôte canvas that Van Gogh used later in France, with its asymmetrical thread count that approximated 11-13 warp by 15-19 weft threads per cm. For the Arles period see Lister *et al.* 2001, pp. 364-66, for the Saint-Rémy period see Hendriks/Van Tilborgh 2001 II, p. 151, and for the Auvers period see Ravaud 1999, pp. 68, 69.

72 This is suggested by the absence of size in sample cross-sections that included the complete build-up of the ground. The exclusion of size from a ground sample might, however, also be explained by the fact that the glue was applied in a liquid (as opposed to gelled) form and was entirely absorbed into the substrate rather than forming a distinct layer on top.



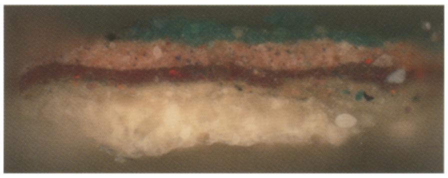
19 *Bank of the Seine* (cat. 106). Paint cross-section from the bottom edge showing a layer of glue size with a ground layer some 0.05 mm thick on top that contains lead white only.

112, 113). Although the hidden compositions could not be revealed by examination, one of them (cat. 112) is thought to have been an *à l'essence* work executed between January and mid-April 1887, based on the pigments used.[73] This early example is in line with the fact that Van Gogh began using other types of semi-absorbent to absorbent substrates in this period, ranging from commercially prepared *à grain* canvases with a thin and lean lead white in oil ground (cats. 87, 88), to unprepared *carton* (cat. 85), and raw wooden panels (cats. 81, 82).



20 *Bank of the Seine* (cat. 106). Detail of brushwork in the river, exploiting the fine corrugated texture of the thinly primed canvas.

– Thinly applied, pure lead white on linen (Table 3.5) (fig. 19)
One of the unusual types of preparation used by Van Gogh, consisted of a very thin layer of lead white in oil (up to around 0.05 mm). The lead white was of a pure variety, without the extenders commonly present in commercial primings.[74] On the one hand, this type of ground was applied to an *étude* quality canvas that was reused for the picture *Undergrowth* (cat. 113).[75] On the other hand, it was applied to a very finely woven canvas used for another *plein-air* landscape of the period, *Bank of the Seine* (cat. 106). The lead white ground present in *Undergrowth*, which is concealed by the multiple build-up of paint layers on top, contains a few particles of toning pigment too. In *Bank of the Seine*, the pure white ground (with no coloured pigment) must have created a particularly bright surface that was left showing overall in between open brushwork. The thin layer now looks greyer than intended, however, primarily due to darkened nubs of the canvas weave that peep through to its surface.[76] The sparse coverage of the linen fabric also provided a fine corrugated texture that was skilfully exploited in the finished picture (fig. 20).



21 *Undergrowth* (cat. 113). Paint cross-section showing the original ground layer with barytes, lead white and calcium carbonate white. Although the layer is complete, there is no glue size evident underneath. The two paint layers on top of the ground belong to an underlying composition, covered up by the artist with a pinkish brown layer that serves as a ground layer for the current landscape. That second ground contains lead white, red ochre, an organic pink-red, ultramarine, emerald green, barium sulphate and possibly a little zinc white. The uppermost layer in the sample is the green foliage.

– Barytes mixed with lead white and calcium carbonate white (Table 3.8) (fig. 21)
A different type of canvas was reused for another version of *Trees and undergrowth* (cat. 112), painted in the same period as the above-mentioned paintings. The very fine linen fabric is coated with a thin white layer that contains barytes as the chief component, mixed with lead white and calcium carbonate white.[77] A low grade of white household paint was probably employed, since, as 19th-century sources inform us, cheaper varieties of lead white were commonly adulterated with varying quantities of barium sulphate, up to 75% in the variety known as 'Dutch white'.[78] In this case we can be quite confident that it was Van Gogh who prepared the canvas, which bears a landscape painting by another hand on the reverse. He evidently simply turned the painting around on the stretching frame and applied a thin coat of white paint across the picture area in order to prepare the canvas for reuse.

– Barytes on finely woven cotton (Table 3.8)
Examinations revealed matching materials used to prepare the canvases used for four works painted in the late summer to autumn of 1887: *Sunflowers gone to seed* (cat. 124), *Self-portrait with grey felt hat* (cat. 130), *Courtesan: after Eisen* (cat. 133 and

73 The use of both cerulean blue and cobalt violet in the underlying painting suggests that it is likely to have been one of the *à l'essence* style pictures made in the period specified, which often feature this combination. Up to now cobalt violet has only been found in Paris paintings dating to this narrow period.

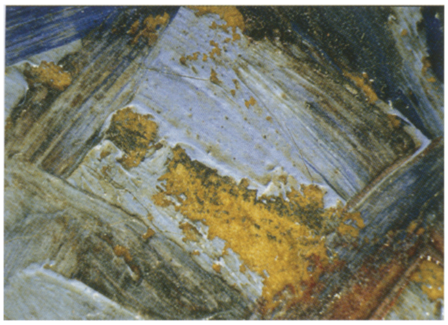
74 For a similar ground type see Renoir's *The skiff* of 1879-80 in London 1990-91, pp. 172-75.

75 This particular quality weave indicates a Paris provenance for the canvas, but the underlying composition could not be dated more exactly.

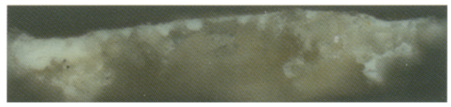
76 The canvas fibres have darkened, both as a result of natural ageing and due to soaking up oil binding from the paint, as well as from a later application of wax-resin adhesive.

77 The large, blocky particles of barium sulphate visible in back-scattered electron images of the ground in cross-section indicate the coarsely ground mineral pigment.

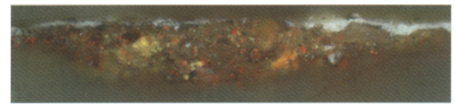
78 Feller 1986, p. 49, and Carlyle 2001, p. 514. A very similar ground was recently identified in Paul Gauguin's *Two Tahitian women* of 1899 (private collection): see Hale 2002, esp. p. 189.



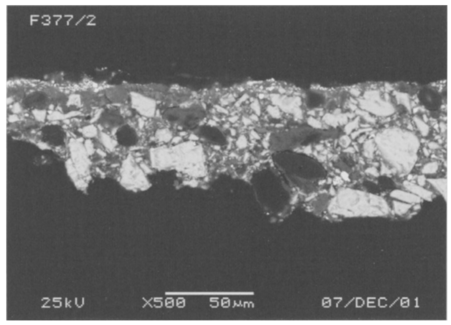
22 *Courtesan: after Eisen* (cat. 133). Enlarged detail showing the beige-coloured barytes ground, with carbon black lines of underdrawing on top visible in between open brushwork.



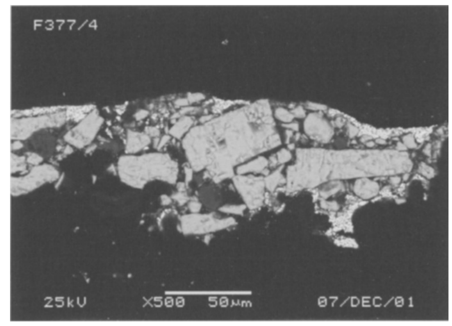
23 *Sunflowers gone to seed* (cat. 124). Paint cross-section from the bottom edge showing the ground layer composed of barytes with silicon and ferrous impurities. The thin layer of lead white on top is a contaminant from later restoration treatment.



25 *Sunflowers gone to seed* (cat. 124). Paint cross-section from a dark brushstroke in the sunflower that contains barytes, silicates, vermilion, chrome yellow, ultramarine and an unidentified brown and red pigment. The thin layer of lead white on top is a later addition.



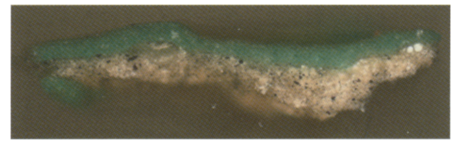
24 Back-scattered electron image of the paint cross-section shown in fig. 23, revealing the large rectangular barytes crystals. The finer, lead white particles are a later contaminant.



26 Back-scattered electron image of the paint cross-section shown in fig. 25, revealing the same coarse barytes mixed into the paint. The finer, lead white particles are a later contaminant.

fig. 22), and *Four sunflowers gone to seed*.[79] All of these pictures are on a very finely woven cotton fabric with an average of 24-25 warp and 34-38 weft thread per cm, thinly prepared with a beige barytes ground.[80] The large, blocky particles of barium sulphate visible in back-scattered electron images of paint cross-sections indicate the coarsely ground mineral pigment, and the presence of strontium confirms barite as the natural source (figs. 23, 24).[81] Furthermore, silicate and orange ochre impurities were detected, commonly associated with a low grade of the mineral and known to give it a pinkish cast.[82] The particular binding medium used, which was identified as a mixture of oil and animal glue in a sample from cat. 124, also plays an important role in creating the distinctive beige colour of these grounds.[83] The ground is left prominent in the sketchily painted background of *Sunflowers gone to seed* (cat. 124) for example, and in the right part of the larger picture of *Four sunflowers gone to seed* (fig. 124c), although there the effect may not have been intended by the artist.[84] In these paintings, the thin application of barium sulphate paint was evidently sufficient to size the fabric and to even out the canvas texture, while the coarse particles of barytes must have given the ground a slight tooth to receive the paint layers on top.

79 F 452 JH 1330. See Otterlo 2003, pp. 181-84, and the full technical examination report dated 12 August 2002, conservation archives, Kröller-Müller Museum.
80 This publication corrects the former assertion, based on surface examination of cats. 130, 133 and F 452 JH 1330 with the stereomicroscope, that the ground layer was brushed onto thin paper laid on cotton, rather than directly onto the fabric itself: see Homburg 1996, pp. 121, 149, note 382, Otterlo 2003, and Hendriks/Geldof 2005. Ongoing research has not produced evidence to confirm this fact. None of the available sample cross-sections, including a new sample of ground taken from F 452 JH 1330 that incorporates the entire build-up right down to the fibres of the cotton support, show paper present in between the ground and the fabric. Moreover, reconstructions made within the HART project of the De Mayerne Programme (see Carlyle 2005) demonstrated that even a thin application of barytes ground will produce a rather even and dense layer that conceals the fabric weave to a greater extent than thin chalk grounds, for example. In the author's opinion it is this compact surface appearance, together with the patchy beige colour, that has caused it to be readily misconstrued for a paper interleaf (resembling the aged tracing paper that was used to square up the print designs in cats. 131 and 133) when viewed under the stereomicroscope.
81 See note 30 and Marino *et al.* 2005, and Marino 2006.
82 In the early industrial manufacture of barytes, iron discoloration might be reduced by a 'bleaching' process, or whiteness improved by adding trace amounts of ultramarine blue pigment. See Feller 1986, pp. 50, 53.
83 Reconstruction tests have revealed that the choice of binding medium has a crucial impact on the colour of the barytes ground. A rather pure grade of barytes mixed with animal glue binding medium provided a white film, whereas mixing exactly the same pigment with an animal glue and oil emulsion created a greenish beige film, and with oil a dark brownish beige one. See Carlyle 2005, p. 121. Analysis of binding medium in a ground sample from cat. 124 was performed at ICN (now RCE), using FTIR (identified protein and barium sulphate), GC-MS (identified linseed? oil) and HPLC (identified animal glue). The fact that oil was detected in a sample from the uncovered ground along the bottom edge (with no brushstrokes on top) confirmed that it was not simply present as binding medium sunk in from the paint.
84 Otterlo 2003, p. 182, suggests that the painting was left unfinished in this area. However, it is also possible that, the ground was originally covered by paint but that the overlying colour has faded over time.



27 *Bridge in the rain: after Hiroshige* (cat. 132). Paint cross-section showing the ground layer, approx. 0.05 mm thick, consisting of calcium carbonate and bone black. The thin layer of emerald green with gypsum on top is from the decorative border.



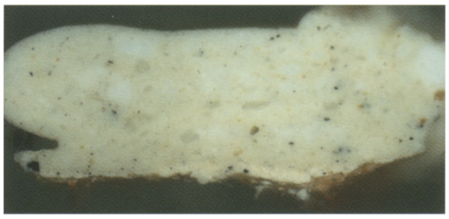
28 *Bridge in the rain: after Hiroshige* (cat. 132). Enlarged detail showing the very thin grey ground visible in between open brushwork.

In the case of *Sunflowers gone to seed* (cat. 124), the makeshift qualities of the support, which was manufactured from a small scrap of cotton that was loosely cut to shape from the selvedge of a roll, and pinned down flat for priming and for painting, point to Van Gogh's own hand.[85] Further evidence for this is provided by samples from overlying brushstrokes in the still life, which contain considerable amounts of the same coarsely ground barytes that Van Gogh must have mixed with his tube colours on the palette too, which accounts for the light gritty texture of paint strokes visible in strong raking light (figs. 25, 26).[86] Unlike cat. 124, the canvases used for the remaining three works, cats. 130, 133 and F 452 JH 1330, were mounted on stretching frames, two of which survive (cat. 130 and F 452 JH 1330). They were stamped by Tasset et L'Hôte (see Table 1), and their non-standard formats suggest that they were custom-made by the firm. Though it is uncertain whether the company also manufactured the canvases using identical materials to cat. 124, this is possible. In Arles, Van Gogh wrote asking Theo to see if Tasset would send a sample of the 'plaster' they employed for preparing absorbent canvas [610],[87] and it is conceivable that the small study of *Sunflowers gone to seed* (cat. 124) is a Paris precedent for experimenting with test materials from Tasset, leading Van Gogh to order the same type of canvas from the colourman for subsequent works.

– Chalk on fine linen (Table 3.1)

Concurrent with the use of a barytes ground for *Courtesan: after Eisen* (cat. 133), Van Gogh experimented with chalk (calcium carbonate) grounds for two other copies after Japanese prints: *Flowering plum orchard: after Hiroshige* (cat. 131), and *Bridge in the rain: after Hiroshige* (cat. 132).[88] Whereas the ground of the first painting (cat. 131), which is now slightly yellowish, contains chalk only, the grey ground of the latter (cat. 132 and fig. 27) consists of chalk mixed with bone black, presumably bound in an animal glue medium, or possibly a mixed animal glue and oil medium, in each case.[89] Both types of chalk ground were very thinly applied onto apparently unsized linen fabric of a matching fine weave, barely coating the nubs of the canvas weave (fig. 28).[90] In the case of *Bridge in the rain: after Hiroshige* (cat. 132), Van Gogh took further measures to prepare his canvas in advance of painting on the grey chalk ground. Technical and experimental evidence indicates that he first brushed on a layer of medium to 'oil out' the light grey picture surface, causing the absorbent calcium carbonate ground to darken to blackish grey as the medium readily soaked in.[91] Prior saturation of the picture area would have afforded a more consistent tone, circumventing the inevitable effects of staining that would other-

85 Several technical features suggest this procedure: selvedge remains along the top side of the painting, reserve shapes of drawing-pin heads that were in place when the canvas was primed, and separate pinholes through which the primed canvas was held down when painting.
86 Although barytes is commonly observed as an extender added during the manufacture of Van Gogh's tube paints, the pigment particles are generally less coarse and always present in much lower quantities than is the case here.
87 Van Gogh thought that the plaster they used was probably pipe clay, and asked if enough could be sent to prepare 4 metres of canvas that he had purchased locally. The term pipe clay is usually reserved for a rather pure (iron oxide free) type of white clay, which is the natural hydrated silicate of aluminium.
88 The calcium carbonate white was confirmed as chalk by the presence of fossil coccoliths in back-scattered electron images of the grounds.
89 Though the binding medium has not been confirmed by analysis, the highly absorbent nature of the grey chalk ground in cat. 132, which readily stained by oil (see note 91), would suggest an aqueous medium. Callen 2000, p. 56, states that ready-primed canvas with a chalk ground was only available by the metre and in white, though absorbent canvas could also be ordered from the colourman to the required size. As early as 1881, Paul Gauguin is known to have prepared his own canvas with thin chalk in animal glue grounds, this subsequently becoming his preferred picture support from 1887 on. See Jirat-Watsiutynski/Travers Newton 1998, p. 237. One example is his *Among the mangoes at Martinique*, 1887 (Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum), which, as Inge Fiedler, microscopist at the Art Institute of Chicago confirmed by analysis, was painted on a cotton canvas prepared with a ground composed of chalk in animal glue.
90 Initially this led us to think that the primed canvases had been lightly abraded before use to increase their porosity, exposing the raw nubs of the weave. However, experimental reconstructions have demonstrated that a thin yet continuous absorbent ground layer can acquire such an abraded look as a consequence of wax-resin lining. See Hendriks 2008, p. 233, figs. 5a-c. See also Nieder *et al.* 2011.



29 *Red cabbages and onions* (cat. 135). Paint cross-section from the right tacking margin. The ground layer, which is approx. 0.23 mm thick, contains lead white, a little bone black, orange ochre, umber and silicates. The thin size layer underneath the ground contains a few particles of orange ochre.



30 Detail of *Red cabbages and onions* (cat. 135). The diagonal bias of the twill fabric shows in the brushwork on top.

wise be caused each time a brushstroke was applied. On the oiled grey ground, Van Gogh built up a monochrome sketch of the composition using dark, fluid washes and fine contour lines.[92]

– Pinkish grey oil grounds on twill (Table 3.6) (fig. 29)
A distinct category is formed by the canvases used for three related pictures, painted in the winter of 1887 to early 1888: *Red cabbages and onions* (cat. 135), *Portrait of Etienne-Lucien Martin* (cat. 136), and the signed and dated *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 137), see Table 3.6. For these pictures Van Gogh employed a matching fine 4/2 warp-faced twill fabric (with an average of 23 warp and weft threads per cm) prepared with a warm pinkish grey ground layer.[93] Essentially the ground resembles a commercial lead white in oil type, but has a more pronounced hue due to significant additions of the usual tinting pigments (bone black, orange ochre and umber).

Paint samples reveal that in each case the ground was applied in two layers on a glue sizing that contains particles of orange ochre. The pigment was probably added to colour the size in order to check its even application, a practice that is mentioned in historical sources.[94] This intimate match of the fabric and preparatory layers shows that the three supports were cut (in the length direction) from the same strip of pre-primed twill. These unusual qualities suggest more expensive canvases, perhaps made to meet the artist's specifications rather than being purchased off the shelf, reflecting a certain level of ambition for the works produced. In each of the three paintings, Van Gogh exploited the colour and especially the pronounced diagonal bias of the twill fabric for different pictorial effects, as discussed in the essay 'Developing technique and style' (figs. 30, 31).

Reused pictures (Table 5)
– An economical approach
An obvious symptom of Van Gogh's economical approach was his habit of overpainting abandoned pictures in order to recycle the supports. Though this was quite a usual practice for painters, Van Gogh perhaps seems to have done it more often than most. Twenty-five of the paintings examined, listed in Table 5, emerged as having been reused in this way. The recycled supports occasionally involved larger, good-quality canvases, such as those used for *Garden with courting couples: Square Saint-Pierre* (cat. 104), or *Quinces, lemons, pears and grapes* (cat. 128). More often, though, they consisted of relatively small and cheap supports, down to the *figure* 3 *étude* canvas used for *Nude girl, seated* (cat. 51), or the *figure* 5 *carton* used for *Glass with yellow roses* (cat. 69), for example. Van Gogh also painted on the backs of some Nuenen pictures to create double-sided works (Table 3.7), and in one instance even recycled a landscape painting by another artist (cat. 112).

91 The unsoiled light grey colour of the chalk with bone black ground can still be seen on outer portions of the tacking margins that were not saturated by oil. On the bottom tacking margin, the edge of the oil-stained area follows a scalloped line that exactly corresponds to the pattern of cusps relating to original tack holes. This indicates that the layer of medium was brushed onto the picture area *before* the canvas was stretched onto a frame, otherwise the boundary of the oiled area would run more or less straight along the edge of the stretcher. The immediate darkening effect of oil bleeding into a grey chalk in glue ground was demonstrated by accurate replicas of the canvas used for *Bridge in the rain: after Hiroshige*. Strokes of oil paint applied onto the light grey surface of the ground caused dark haloes to form around their periphery. See Carlyle 2005, p. 114.
92 The intricate construction of the bridge and drawing of the figures, all filled into an exact reserve, indicates a careful planning by means of a detailed preliminary sketch. Only small patches of this initial sketch are visible now, however, since paint layers on top generally cover it up. Microscopic examination reveals fine painted contour lines within the twinned figures on the bridge, for example, delineating their limbs and the fringed edges of their parasols. Moreover an extra wash of translucent dark paint or medium seems to provide denser shading in the figures on the right side of the bridge compared to the pair on the left.
93 The fabric of cat. 135 was characterised visually using an X-ray by Jennifer Barnett, textile conservator, Amsterdam. Report dated 12 September 2003. In June 2009 a more comprehensive automated thread count report was made by R. Johnson and D. Johnson, Thread Count Automation Project (TCAP), unpublished, Van Gogh Museum.
94 Thomas Sully mentions adding vermilion to a paste size to make it visible in his *Hints to young painters and the process of portrait painting as practised by the late Thomas Sully*, Philadelphia 1873, pp. 136, 137. With thanks to Maartje Witlox for drawing our attention to this source. The presence of red or orange pigment particles in the size layer was observed in samples from several of the Van Gogh paintings examined, besides these on twill, namely cats. 73, 83, 113 and 115.



31 *Portrait of Etienne-Lucien Martin* (cat. 136). Detail showing the crusty paint surface built up in layered touches, disguising the diagonal weave pattern of the twill fabric.

– Speed of recycling

For 12 of the paintings investigated, raking light examination or X-rays revealed brushstrokes in the underlying image (cats. 51, 69, 73-77, 84, 95 and vaguely in cats. 99, 101, 111). This enabled the first picture to be dated with varying degrees of precision on the evidence of the subject-matter portrayed. Based on the proposed margins of dating for the underlying and final images, listed in Table 5, it was then possible to estimate the time that had elapsed before the supports were reused. In the remaining works, though, the covered image was too thin to be revealed by examination, either because Van Gogh had scraped it down or because the paint was economically applied to start with, perhaps never advancing beyond a first stage of lean underpaint. For these hidden works, the technical characteristics of the canvas, ground and paint layers could still be used as evidence to indicate when the underlying pictures were made, and hence to deduce the speed with which the picture supports had been recycled.

One of the fastest-recycled canvases was that used for *Nude girl, seated* (cat. 51), an academic study painted in the studio of Fernand Cormon, which Van Gogh attended from April to early June 1886. The underlying floral still life must have been one of his first exercises in this genre made only weeks before, after his March arrival in Paris.[95] Other canvases were reused quickly too. Two examples are woodland views dated to the period May to July 1887: cat. 112, which seems to overlie a failed *à l'essence* work executed in the period January to mid-April,[96] and cat. 111, which is believed to cover a *plein-air* landscape study painted in Asnières in the spring.[97] On the other hand, Van Gogh overpainted some pictures more than a year after they had been made. This is the case with four Paris works dated mid- to late 1887 that are thought to be painted over studies of peasant heads made in Nuenen (cats. 99-101, 129 and fig. 17).[98] Other examples include *Montmartre: windmills and allotments* (cat. 93), which was executed in March to mid-April of 1887, which is considered to cover a floral still life of the previous summer,[99] and *View from Theo's apartment* (cat. 95) of late March to mid-April 1887, which overlies a scraped portrait or self-portrait painted in Paris sometime before September 1886.[100]

– Pictorial considerations

One striking feature of the works recycled in 1886, in particular, is that Van Gogh did not aim to start anew with a pristine surface, but demonstrated a more nonchalant approach. Sometimes he simply painted directly over a work with pronounced impasto, which remains visible to an obvious degree in the finished picture (cats.

95 Other technical evidence points to a Paris origin for the canvas: its thin and open weave, and the fact that it was prepared with a single layer of lead white in oil ground. Furthermore, surface examination revealed bright colours used for the underlying still life, which are consistent with a Paris date.

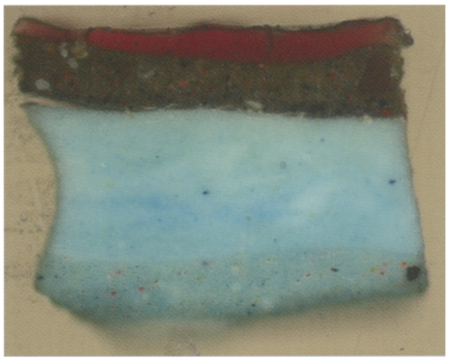
96 This assertion is based on the absorbent types of ground, as well as on the use of the pigment cobalt violet in the underlying composition, since available evidence suggests that neither of these features occur in pictures made before this date. Cerulean blue was also identified, a pigment that often features with cobalt violet in the colour schemes of Van Gogh's *à l'essence* pictures.

97 The finely woven canvas prepared with a lead white on thin calcium carbonate white ground indicates that it was purchased in Paris. An X-ray of the painting suggests the contours of a landscape in the underlying image. Together with the light blue colours of the sky visible along two edges of the composition, and impasto brushwork, this points to an outdoor study made in Asnières.

98 The underlying portrait subject-matter is vaguely suggested by the form of brushstrokes visible in X-rays of two of the paintings, cat. 99 and especially cat. 101. Other technical features also point to the Nuenen origin of the canvases, including the picture formats, the lack of original tacking margins, the particular type of double ground preparation, as well as the use of dark mixtures of specific pigments that were usual at that time (umber, red and yellow ochres, genuine Naples yellow, carbon black and Prussian blue), and finally a weave match with a Nuenen painting (F 70a) thought to be on canvas cut from the same roll as cats. 99 and 101. This evidence is discussed at length in the relevant catalogue entries.

99 Though there is no direct evidence for the image portrayed, the particular non-standard format resembles other tall canvases used for flower still lifes in the summer of 1886, and the gauze-like canvas also indicates Paris rather than an earlier date. Furthermore, genuine Naples yellow was identified in the underlying paint layers, a pigment that appears to have disappeared from Van Gogh's palette after the summer of 1886.

100 The open weave canvas with thin threads indicates a Paris origin for the support, rather than an earlier date. An X-ray of the painting reveals a scraped image that very closely resembles the portrait or self-portrait underlying *People strolling in a park, Paris* (F 225 JH 1110), which was painted in the autumn of 1886. Moreover, both works are on matching pieces of primed canvas cut in weft alignment from the same roll. Together these observations suggest a March to September margin of dating for the covered portrait in cat. 95. See Vergeest/Verbeek 2005.



32 *Glass with yellow roses* (cat. 69). On top of the light ground are two blue paint layers belonging to the background of an abandoned study of a plaster cast. The background was covered up with a thick dark layer that contains an elaborate mixture of pigments: vermilion, zinc white, lead white, red ochre, ultramarine, brown pigment, possibly Prussian blue, methyl violet, Kopp's purpurin lake and redwood lake with starch. A transparent glaze of Kopp's purpurin was applied on top of this dark layer.

51, 69). Alternatively he took rather crude measures to prepare the existing painting for reuse, just scraping it down roughly, or loosely covering it up with an uneven paint layer. Particularly clear examples of both practices are provided by *Self-portrait with pipe* (cat. 75) from September to November 1886, and the slightly later *Self-portrait with glass* of December 1886-January 1887 (cat. 77). In these cases, though, the very rough look of the paint surfaces seems to be due in part to an unsound technique. In cat. 75, jagged islands were created where the paint layers of the underlying composition were torn off, whereas pronounced drying cracks formed in both overlying self-portraits. Together these defects indicate that Van Gogh had scraped and painted over the first images before they were properly dry, contrary to warnings in 19th-century manuals.[101] Nonetheless, the fact that he signed *Self-portrait with a glass* (cat. 77) suggests that he was satisfied with the end result, despite the marked interference of texture between the layers.

It may well be that in the case of these recycled paintings of 1886, Van Gogh enjoyed the sensation of working on a used, 'distressed' picture surface for the more lively formal qualities it offered.[102] From early 1887 on, his interest in exploiting picture supports with a more explicit surface texture is demonstrated by his experiments with roughly hewn and randomly abraded, raw wooden panels (cats. 81, 82), *carton* supports prepared with a rolled grainy priming (cat. 125 and fig. 8), thinly primed canvases (cats. 87, 106, 119 and figs. 14, 19, 20, 38, 39, for example), and more pronounced twill weave fabrics (cats. 135-37 and figs. 30, 31), as discussed in the essay 'Developing technique and style'.

Conversely, as he began to develop a thinner manner of painting in combination with a fine divisionist touch from the end of 1886, he evidently found a smoother preparation of the picture surface more appropriate. In his late 1886 *Self-portrait with pipe* (cat. 75) discussed above, the confusion of the image due to competing surface textures is most severe in the thinly painted passages. However, as this lean style of execution blossomed into the series of *à l'essence* works painted in the period January to mid-April 1887, it is striking how Van Gogh now took great pains to eliminate all traces of the underlying designs (cats. 75, 80, 84, 92, 93).[103] Indeed, were it not for the evidence of an X-ray one would never suspect the existence of an abandoned portrait underlying *In the café: Agostina Segatori in Le Tambourin* (cat. 84) for example, since even careful inspection of the picture surface in raking light gives no hint of its presence.[104] Presumably a relatively smooth preparation of the supports was considered important to avoid disrupting the very delicate effect of surface patterning created using fine dots and dashes of even colour in this group of works.

– Dark covering paint layers

Besides scraping to eliminate the existing picture, Van Gogh often covered it up with relatively flat-toned layers of paint. Sometimes the covering layer was a dark paint composed of many opposing coloured pigments, as in *Glass with yellow roses* (cat. 69 and fig. 32) and *Apples* (cat. 126), perhaps suggesting the economical practice of mixing in leftover colours that consisted of accumulated remains from the cleaning of brushes or from the palette.[105] Alternatively, the dark covering layers consisted mainly of carbon black, a pigment which, as with most other Impression-

101 In his *La science de la peinture* of 1891, Jehan George Vibert advised full scraping down of underlayers to avoid the risk of cracks forming where new colours were thickly laid 'on other thicknesses imperfectly dry at the bottom'. John Samuel Templeton, in his 1846 *Guide to oil painting*, warned that paint should be fully dry before scraping, otherwise the paint would be 'torn off', leaving the surface 'in a rough and ragged condition'. See for quotations, Carlyle 2001, p. 212.

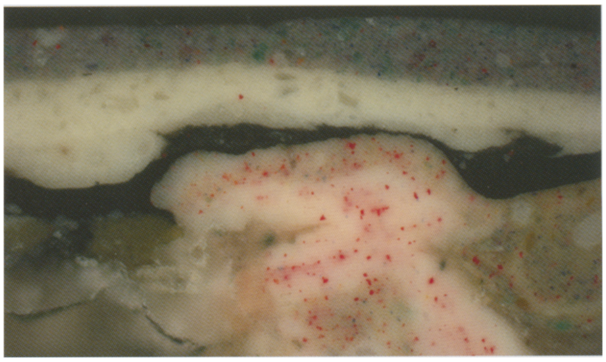
102 Occasionally, not just the texture of the underlying image, but also its colours were allowed to play through to the surface in the finished work in a more subtle way, though perhaps as much by accident as by design (cats. 51, 74, 76).

103 *View from Theo's apartment* (cat. 95) is an exception among this group of *à l'essence* works examined, for although the underlying portrait has been scraped down, brushstrokes defining facial features are still recognisable to some extent in raking light.

104 Some tiny surface irregularities in the form of scraped islands of paint with a cross-shaped scratch in the right background area provide the only evidence for the existence of the first portrait.

105 It was established practice for painters, ranging from 17th-century masters like Rembrandt to 19th-century painters of the French Academy, to recycle paint remains to provide thin and translucent washes of dull-toned underpaint, for example. See Van de Wetering 1997, pp. 24, 25, and for this so-called 'sauce' Callen 2000, p. 19, respectively. The covering layers found on Van Gogh's paintings were generally more densely pigmented and opaque, however.

33 *Basket of pansies* (cat. 102). The bottom of the paint cross-section shows unevenly scraped-down layers from an abandoned painting (no original ground is present). They were covered over with a carbon black layer some 0.02 mm thick that includes a little zinc white and vermilion in the top part. As a basis for the current still life, a new white ground approx. 0.65 mm thick was applied on top of the black covering layer. This second ground consists of two layers. The bottom one contains lead white, zinc white, a little barium sulphate and silicates. The top one contains lead white, a little barium sulphate, bone white and possibly zinc white. The uppermost layer in the paint sample is the background of the current still life, and contains tin-based cochineal lake with starch, emerald green, French ultramarine, vermilion, lead white, barium sulphate and zinc white. The background has discoloured from violet to greenish grey where exposed to light, due to fading of the tin-cochineal lake ingredient.



ist and Post-Impressionist painters, did not usually feature on Van Gogh's figurative palette. Examples of the latter occur in *View from Theo's apartment* (cat. 95) and *Basket of pansies* (cat. 102 and fig. 33). Samples from *Quinces, lemons, pears and grapes* (cat. 128) revealed that both types of dark paint were used in different parts of the still life to cover up the underlying landscape, simply allocating available paints at random to cover the relatively large picture area. Uniquely in *Glass with yellow roses* (cat. 69), which is painted over an abandoned plaster cast study, Van Gogh allowed the dark covering layer to play a calculated role in the final picture. Applied in the background area only, it plays through the transparent red glazes applied on top to create rich, warm shading (fig. 64).

– Pale covering layers with zinc white

More usually, though, the dark covering layer was hidden in turn by a light ground applied on top, providing a suitably reflective substrate on which to paint a new picture. With one exception, *Self-portrait with pipe* (cat. 75), these pale intermediate grounds are characterised by the fact that zinc white, a rare ingredient in the commercial primings used by Van Gogh, was mixed with the lead white. This combined the advantages of both types of white, with the zinc white providing a more brilliant white than lead white would alone, while the lead white dried more quickly.[106] It may have been Van Gogh who mixed the two pigments, though ready-mixtures were also sold for priming purposes in the late 19th century.[107] In three instances the cool brightness of the white grounds was further enhanced by traces of French ultramarine (cats. 92, 93, 95), perhaps added by the artist or colour merchant to counter the known yellowing tendency of the oil binding medium. In the paintings concerned, executed in a common *l'essence* technique, the strong luminosity of the ground was exploited to enhance the intensity of the bright coloured washes and graphic touches of colour applied very thinly on top (fig. 34).

It is unfortunate that nowadays these grounds containing zinc white exhibit characteristic defects that have impaired the condition of the pictures involved, making them quite easy to recognise with the naked eye. Either the grounds have dried more slowly than the paint layers on top, which consequently exhibit disfiguring drying cracks (cats. 77, 99-102, 104, 126 and fig. 35), or the inherent brittleness of the films containing zinc white has caused sharp stress cracks to form within them (cats. 92-95, 129 and fig. 34). Both shortcomings are often associated with the use of zinc white in oil.[108]

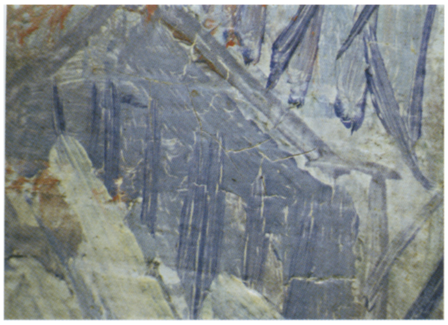
– Mid-toned covering layers (pinkish brown and pinkish grey)

In addition to these light grounds, from the spring of 1887 onwards Van Gogh began using mid-toned ground layers to cover up abandoned pictures. This may have rationalised his method of applying whitish on blackish layers (see cats. 95,

106 Zinc white also has the advantage that it tends to retain its original bright whiteness upon ageing, rather than turning yellow.

107 A variety known as Foundation White was advertised by several companies in the 1880s, which as H.C. Standage described in *The artists' table of pigments* [1892], 'was made with Flake white and zinc white' and was 'used for priming canvas or painting ground previous to painting on it'. See Carlyle 2001, p. 517.

108 See Kühn 1986, p. 175 and note 66. It is notable that drying cracks have formed even when the added proportion of zinc to lead white is rather low (less than 10% by weight), since the siccative action of lead white might be expected to improve drying properties. Quantitative SEM-EDS analysis to establish the ratio of zinc white to lead white in ground samples from the paintings was performed by Ralph Haswell at the Shell Technology Centre in Amsterdam (STCA).



34 *View from Theo's apartment* (cat. 95). Detail showing thin brushwork that exploits the luminosity of the ground containing zinc white. The presence of zinc white has caused sharp stress cracks to form in the ground, as well as drying cracks in overlying brushstrokes.



35 *Basket of pansies* (cat. 102). Detail of disfiguring drying cracks associated with the use of an intermediate ground containing zinc white (see fig. 33).



36 *Undergrowth* (cat. 113). Enlarged detail showing the pinkish brown ground used to cover up an underlying composition, which is left exposed between open brushwork (see also figs. 21, 38, 39).

102), since the relatively opaque and dark layers could both conceal the image and provide an appropriate ground tone in one go. Also, the mid-toned grounds could be regarded as a revival of an earlier approach involving the occasional use of flat mid-toned layers to temper the light surfaces of his primed canvases, such as the streaky grey layer he had applied in the Rubens-like *Portrait of an old man* (cat. 45).

The mid-toned covering layers found on Van Gogh's 1887 paintings could be separated into two distinct types, with a pinkish brown (fig. 36) or a pinkish grey (fig. 37) hue respectively, as described in more detail below. The warm pinkish brown grounds, in particular, came close to the look of a wooden palette, thus simplifying Van Gogh's task of mixing colours, which when viewed on the palette now more closely resembled their effect on the actual painting. This dispensed with the need to anticipate colour changes caused by transferring paints from one surface to another, helping to speed up the painting process. The pinkish brown and pinkish grey grounds fostered a direct and rapid technique in other ways too. Left showing in between open brushwork, the grounds could provide ready intermediate tones for the modelling of form, or powerful contrasts of colour and tone in relation to brushstrokes applied on top, for example.

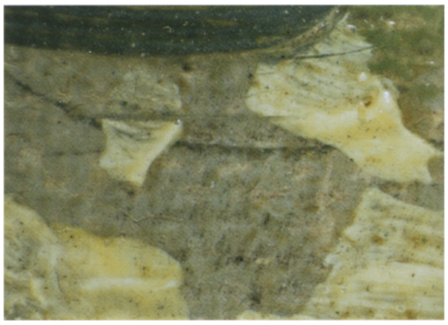
– Composition of the intermediate covering layers as evidence for chronology

Both types of light and darker toned covering layers described above emerged as a helpful feature for establishing a chronology for the pictures made on top. Often detailed comparative analysis of the composition of the intermediate layers on different pictures revealed an exact match, in terms of the specific types and quantities of pigment combined (see the last column in Table 5). This leads to the conclusion that Van Gogh had used a single batch of mixed paint and applied it to several canvases at once, preparing them for reuse. Furthermore, once left to dry, the prepared supports seem generally to have been used up quickly, one after the other, rather than left lying around the studio for long periods of time. This fact provides useful evidence to help group associated works that were painted around the same date in a common style.

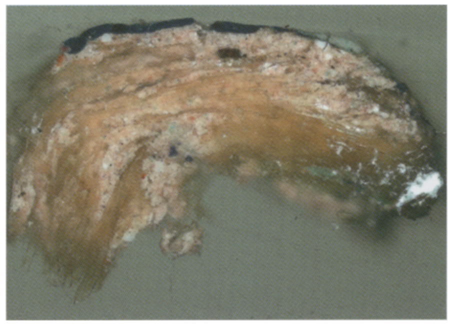
One example are three *à l'essence* paintings executed with a fine divisionist touch in the period March to mid-April 1887, with corresponding pale intermediate grounds of matching composition (cats. 92, 93, 95). Another example is a cluster of works painted in the period May to June 1887 (cats. 99-102), showing identical intermediate whitish layers with the unusual ingredient of bone white (figs. 17, 33).[109] Also belonging to this group, however, is a canvas that seems to have been reused only some months later for *Self-portrait with pipe and straw hat* (cat. 129), which is dated to September or October 1887 on the evidence of its style. Since in theory the artist could always put aside a prepared support for some time before reusing it, this chronological grouping of works based on the match of intermediate, artist-applied ground layers cannot be considered a hard-and-fast rule.

As regards the mid-toned grounds that Van Gogh applied from the spring of 1887 to cover up rejected works, these could be separated into two distinct types, with a pinkish brown or pinkish grey hue respectively. The pinkish brown colour contained an elaborate mixture of 11 pigments: emerald green, synthetic ultramarine, orange ochre associated with gypsum, red ochre, red lake on an aluminium

109 Bone white was identified by the SEM-EDS detection of calcium and phosphor in white pigment particles (no black particles were present).



37 *Horse chestnut tree in blossom* (cat. 103). Enlarged detail showing the pinkish grey ground used to cover up an underlying composition, visible between open brushwork. A carbon black line from the preliminary sketch made on the ground is also evident (see also fig. 40).



38 *Self-portrait* (cat. 119). Paint cross-section from the left edge. The pinkish brown ground layer has mixed with canvas fibres at the bottom of the sample, where it sank into the unsized reverse of a Nuenen picture (see fig. 39). The ground contains lead white, red ochre, French ultramarine, emerald green, an organic red, barium sulphate, carbon black and possibly a little zinc white. The uppermost blue layer is from the artist's clothing.



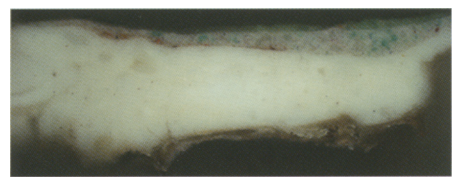
39 *Self-portrait* (cat. 119), detail of unpainted edge. A pinkish brown ground layer was brushed onto the reverse of a Nuenen painting, sinking into the fabric to leave a lightly corrugated surface (see fig. 38).

substrate (probably Kopp's purpurin), lead white, barium sulphate, possibly zinc white, and very little carbon black (fig. 21). This complex mixture provides a highly specific fingerprint for the paint used to cover up underlying pictures in two studies of trees (cats. 111, 112) painted in May to July 1887. An opaque reddish brown, possibly the same colour, is also reported to have been brushed onto the reverse of cat. 112. Now hidden by a lining canvas, an old photograph shows that the layer was used to cover up a landscape by another hand, providing a unique example of Van Gogh recycling a picture by another artist.[110] Furthermore, examinations revealed that Van Gogh applied the same ground colour to the reverse of several Nuenen canvases too, preparing them to be reused for a series of self-portrait studies (cats. 116-20 and figs. 38, 116g, for which see cats. 111, 112, note 2) and a landscape (cat. 114), all from mid-July to August 1887 (Table 3.7). In this case the pinkish brown primings were thinly applied in a single coat that sank into the unsized backs of the canvases, leaving a lightly corrugated surface (fig. 39).[111]

Compared to the pinkish brown colour, the formulation of the pinkish grey one is much simpler with only five pigments: lead white, a coarse barytes, emerald green, French ultramarine and a fine red iron oxide pigment (rather than the red ochre most usually found in samples of Van Gogh's paint).[112] Moreover, this colour appears in pictures that are dated somewhat further apart, among them two versions of undergrowth (cat. 113 and fig. 113a) painted in July of 1887, but also the earlier *Horse chestnut tree in blossom* (cat. 103) dated to May 1887 (fig. 40), and *In the café: Agostina Segatori in Le Tambourin* (cat. 84), which is thought to have been painted between January and March of that year. In the latter portrait, the grey colour was not just applied as a uniform layer, but in different shades that defined the main planes of the background area, for example. Either Van Gogh replicated the same pinkish grey colour in these different works, or most likely, again used a single batch of paint, which would explain the consistent ratios of exactly the same pigments observed in paint samples.

Underdrawing and use of the perspective frame (Table 6)

Like other late 19th-century painters, Vincent van Gogh is known to have employed a device called a perspective frame as a practical alternative to the complex mathematical laws of constructing classical perspective (see Drawings 1-3 for an extensive

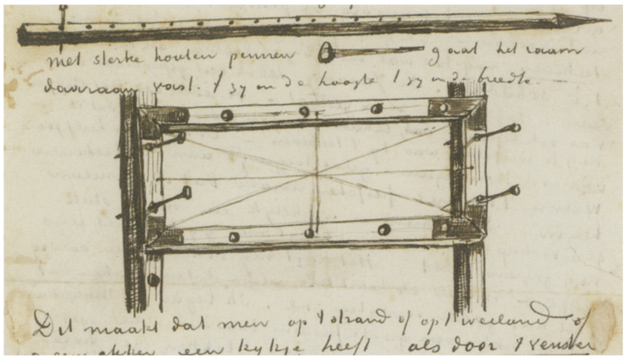


40 *Horse chestnut tree in blossom* (cat. 103), paint cross-section from the bottom turnover edge. The first ground layer, which is some 0.13 mm thick, consists of lead white with a few orange ochre and red-brown particles, with a glue size layer underneath. The second, pinkish grey ground layer applied by Van Gogh contains lead white, barium sulphate, emerald green, ultramarine and fine red particles. The uppermost layer in the sample is the green foliage.

110 The old photograph records that the covering paint layer was scraped off, revealing the landscape, before the picture was lined. The fact that the back of the canvas is now hidden by a lining canvas means that it is not possible to investigate the question of the reddish brown layer further, by means of sampling remains, for example.

111 Visual inspection also suggests a possible match with the ground layer used for the verso of F 365v JH 1354, *Self-portrait with a straw hat* (fig. 116f), as well as the ground layers left uncovered on the reverse of F 156 JH 569, *Head of a woman* of 1885 (Paintings 1, cat. 10), and F 163 JH 687, *Head of a man*. However, analysis of paint samples has not been carried out to confirm the matching composition of these colours.

112 In each case SEM-EDS analysis consistently detected iron alone (without elements such as aluminium and silicon), indicating a pure red iron oxide pigment rather than red ochre.



41 Sketch of a perspective frame in letter 254, The Hague, 5 August 1882. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

introduction on the topic). Different varieties existed, ranging from a simple card with a rectangle cut out of the middle,[113] to a more elaborate wooden frame with threads or wires stretched across its window, which was the type that Van Gogh preferred.[114] He drew and described improved versions of the device in his letters and sketchbooks several times between 1882 and 1890. Moreover, he had the peculiar habit of loosely tracing the actual frame onto his picture supports, providing lasting evidence of its use.

It is known from letters that he wrote in The Hague in 1882 that he owned a frame with a union-jack grid pattern, consisting of a vertical and horizontal thread intersected by two diagonals laced across its window (fig. 41). Yet so far, comprehensive technical examination of the drawings and paintings that he made in Holland up to 1885 has provided virtually no evidence of traced contours associated with its use. The current study of underdrawing in his Antwerp and Paris paintings suggests that that changed with the pictures made in 1887, the second year of his stay in the French capital.

A total of 93 paintings were examined for underdrawings with the naked eye, under the stereomicroscope and using infrared reflectography.[115] Traced lines from a cross with diagonals frame were found in 11, possibly 12 works, all dating from the spring and summer of 1887.[116] Since this turnaround coincided with Van Gogh's switch to a more open and generally thinner application of brighter colours, it is likely that this simply makes the underdrawing easier to detect. Backing this idea is the fact that 27 of the 37 works (around 73%, in other words) in which any form of underdrawing at all was detected, also date to 1887.

Equally, though, it is quite possible that the perspective frame became a more routine feature of Van Gogh's method at the time when he embarked upon a lengthy series of *plein-air* views of Paris and its surroundings. Leaning upon his Dutch experience, the perspective frame would have offered a familiar aid to help choose his subject and quickly set up the spatial composition of his landscapes on the spot. Uniquely, *Basket of pansies* (cat. 102 and fig. 42) provides one example where the tool was used for a still life rather than a landscape. Yet this, too, is thought to have been sketched *in situ* rather than in the studio, the tambourine-shaped table indicating the setting of the Tambourin café.

– Standard frame sizes

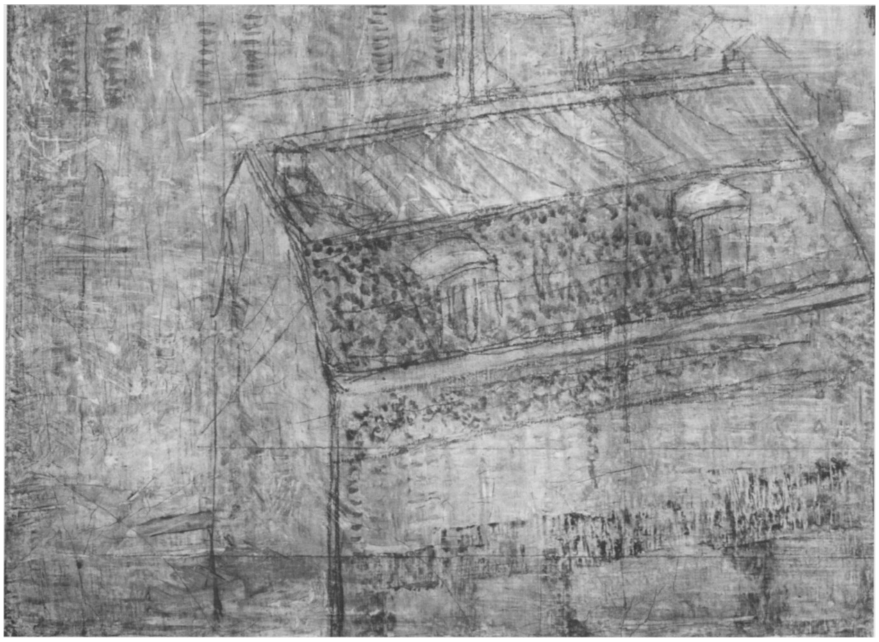
Reconstructions based on visible underdrawing suggested that Van Gogh employed a limited number of frames in the works examined. Four different ones could be distinguished, in standard sizes that matched the commercial formats of the picture supports he generally used in Paris (Table 6). Two of these frames, both constructed with bars that measured around 4 cm wide, had been reused for several pictures. The first one had outer dimensions corresponding to a *figure* 6 format

113 Callen 2000, p. 184.
114 Callen 2000, pp. 182-85.
115 Some of the findings reproduced here have been published in Hendriks 2005.
116 For another published example of a perspective frame used for an Asnières landscape see Hulshoff/Van Heugten 1994. In addition, personal observation of paintings during the Van Gogh exhibition held at Foundation Pierre Gianadda, Martigny, Switzerland, from 21 June to 26 November 2000, indicated underdrawing from a perspective frame in the following Asnières landscapes: F 300 JH 1275, F 301 JH 1327, F 303 JH 1323 and F 312 JH 1253. A work in the collection of the Kröller-Müller Museum may also be added to this list: see Otterlo 2003, F 342 JH 1256.

42 Detail of infrared reflectogram, *Basket of pansies* (cat. 102).

43 *View from Theo's apartment* (cat. 95), detail of infrared reflectogram showing bottom left corner of traced perspective frame. The diagonal axis does not quite run to the corner and overshoots onto its wooden part.

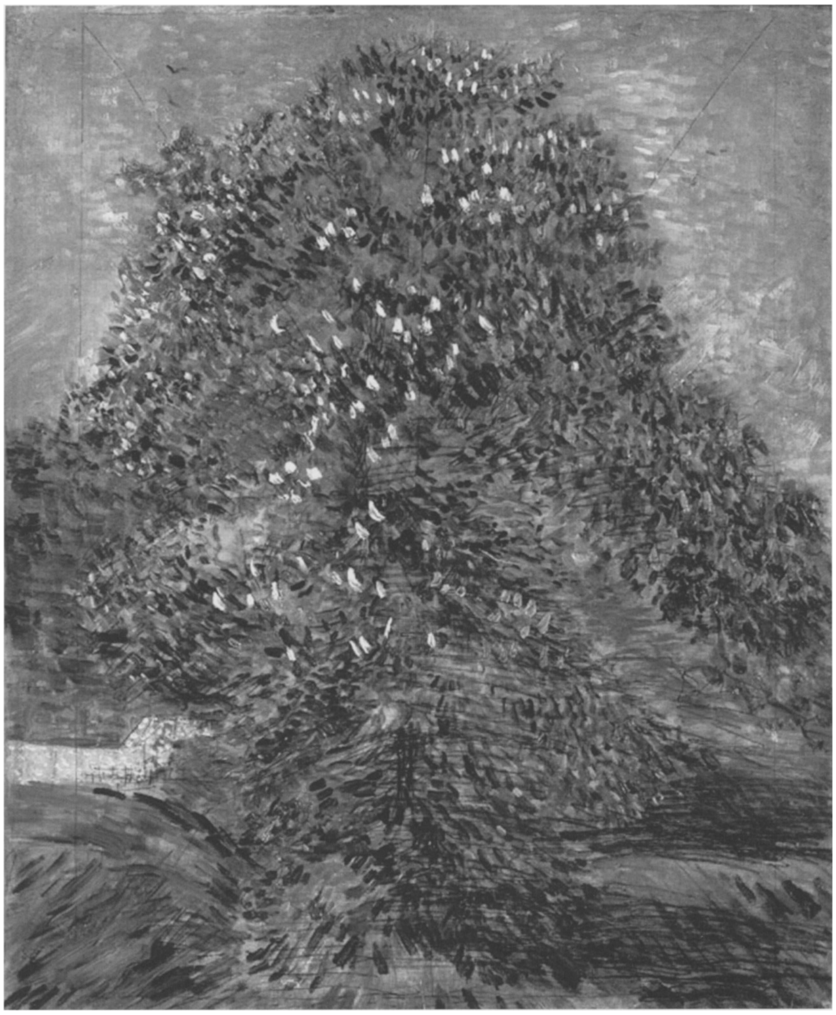




(41 x 33 cm), with a window that consequently measured around 33 x 25 cm. The second, larger frame had a *paysage* 12 format (60 x 46 cm) with a window area of approx. 52 x 38 cm. In one instance Van Gogh also used a *figure* 4 (24 x 33 cm) frame with a window measuring approx. 17 x 26 cm, and in another picture he seems to have drawn part of a *paysage* 25 (81 x 60 cm).

In Nuenen, Van Gogh had specially ordered a perspective frame made by a carpenter to the size he required.[117] For the standard format frames he used in Paris, however, a ready option would have been to purchase a commercial stretcher or strainer, adding strings to adapt it for use as a perspective frame. Possible evidence that a stretcher was used is the fact that, often, the traced diagonals do not quite run to the inner (or outer) corners of the frame that would have been obstructed by keys. Consequently these lines were sometimes corrected to the corners once the stretcher had been lifted from the canvas, explaining pentimenti that overshoot onto what would have been its wooden part (fig. 43). Equally, though, this common feature may result from the imperfect way in which the perspective frame had been made or drawn, since precision was not a usual feature of Van Gogh's method.

117 Drawings 2, p. 19.



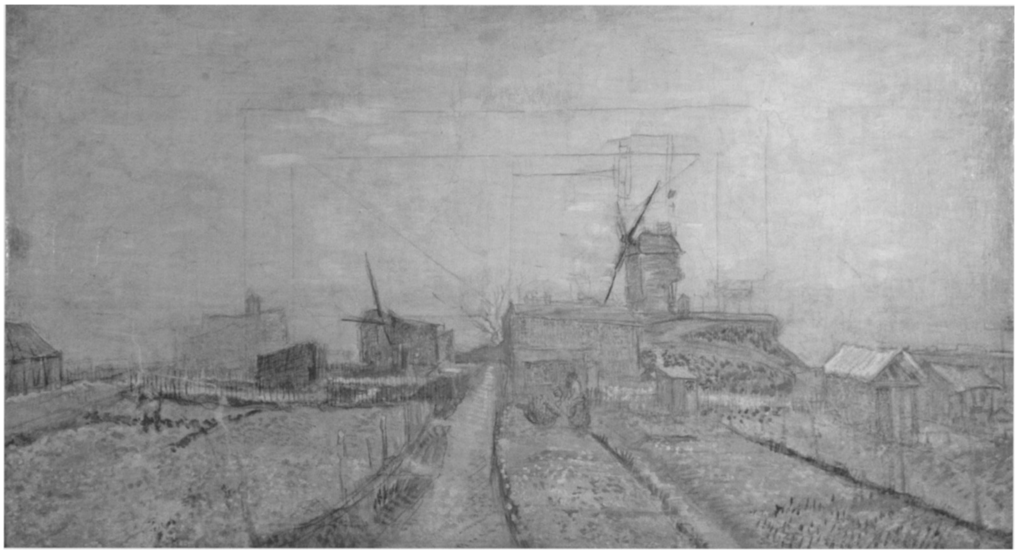
44 Infrared reflectogram, *Horse chestnut tree in blossom* (cat. 103).

– Size of frame and canvas correspond

For the majority (seven) of the pictures examined, Van Gogh chose the frame that conformed most closely to the size of his canvas. Accordingly underdrawings for *figure* 6 frames were found on the *figure* 6-10 canvases examined, and underdrawings for *paysage* 12 frames on the *figure* 10-15 ones. With one exception (cat. 93), Van Gogh simply traced the frame onto the middle of his canvas. Logically, when the frame matched the size of the canvas, or was slightly bigger, its outer edge was not drawn. For these straightforward examples, the tracing could well have been done as a routine preparation in the studio, even in advance of choosing a particular subject.

Taking the centred frame as his starting point, Van Gogh might go on to exploit this feature to strengthen the impact of his design. A notable example is *Horse chestnut tree in blossom* (cat. 103 and fig. 44), where a vertical *paysage* 12 perspective frame was drawn virtually onto the middle of the *figure* 10 canvas in the usual way, more than filling its height. Van Gogh subsequently sketched in the large tree, anchored down the vertical axis of the frame that runs exactly through its crown. Broad zigzag lines were used to establish the key planes of its foliage, with weighted shapes that practically fill the canvas on the right side. The large scale and powerful modelling of the tree help to create a particularly bold image while avoiding a stark symmetry.

Usually, the fact that Van Gogh traced the perspective frame more or less onto the middle of his canvas meant that its horizontal axis (corresponding to the horizon line) divided his landscapes into equal parts of land and sky. One exception is



45 Infrared reflectogram, *Montmartre; windmills and allotments* (cat. 93).



46 Infrared reflectogram, *Impasse des Deux Frères* (cat. 92).

Montmartre: windmills and allotments (cat. 93 and fig. 45), which is on a broad canvas of non-standard format (45.2 x 81.4 cm). In this case he could have used the *paysage* 12 format perspective frame (approx. 46 x 60 cm) to fill the height of the canvas, fixing the horizon line midway across the composition in the normal way. Yet instead he drew a smaller horizontal *figure* 6 frame (33 x 41 cm), virtually centred left and right, but dropped 3.5 cm towards the bottom edge, lowering the horizon accordingly. Originally the intention may have been to enhance the impression of looking up the gently sloping hill of Montmartre. However, many changes were made in the course of underdrawing to reach the final composition, which now makes the view seem peculiarly flat.

– Frame, or segment of frame covers part of composition only

For two other landscapes, *Impasse des Deux Frères* (cat. 92) and *By the Seine* (cat. 107), Van Gogh similarly turned to the use of a perspective frame that was smaller than the picture support, covering only part of the scene to be portrayed. The exceptionally large, *basse figure* 40 format landscape, *Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette* (cat. 115), shows yet another approach, since only a segment of a frame was drawn in the right foreground area. In each case, Van Gogh's procedure was clearly



47 Infrared reflectogram, *By the Seine* (cat. 107).

determined by the particular compositional effect that he had in mind. However, it is striking that these three pictures share a common characteristic, namely a strongly receding element depicted at the left or right edge, offset by planar features in the remaining part of the landscape.

This combination is well illustrated by *Impasse des Deux Frères* (cat. 92 and fig. 46). Like *Montmartre: windmills and allotments* (cat. 93), cat. 92 was painted on canvas of wider than standard *marine* format, so that Van Gogh's usual squarer perspective frames simply did not fit the elongated picture area. Instead, the horizontal *figure* 6 frame covered only the right two-thirds of the scene to be portrayed. Having traced the frame onto the canvas, Van Gogh went on to draw the top edge of the fence enclosing the Moulin de la Galette complex precisely along its horizontal axis. Furthermore the crossing of its threads marked the point where the fence is intersected by a tall flagpole at the entrance gateway. Only limited depth is suggested, due to the fence that runs across the middleground to mask the distant view. Contrast is provided by the steeply receding path and façade depicted at the left edge of the picture area, which, since they lay beyond the boundaries of the traced perspective frame, were sketched with lines that converge towards a separate vanishing point. The resulting split-angle view provides a strange effect, splaying the foreground area.

An opposite procedure was followed in *By the Seine* (cat. 107 and fig. 47), where Van Gogh now used the perspective frame to help draw the sharply receding, rather than the flatter portion of the landscape. The picture was made on a standard *paysage* 15 canvas (50 x 65 cm), which the *paysage* 12 perspective frame (46 x 60 cm) would have matched quite well. Yet a much smaller *figure* 4 frame was drawn onto the left half of the canvas instead, with its right edge strategically dissecting the landscape through the foot and hand of the strolling man.[118] Presumably the frame was helpful in constructing this more complex part of the scene, where the tree-lined banks of the Seine turn into the far distance. The gentle slant of the river on the right could be managed without this aid, as separate construction lines reveal.

118 Only the top part of the frame is revealed by infrared reflectography, with some faint diagonals across its window, the rest being masked by thick light paint in the foreground.

The painting is unfinished, leaving a ruled graphite line visible along the unpainted horizon, with detailed contouring of the shoreline beneath it and the industrial skyline above.

In the later picture, *Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette* (cat. 115), only the bottom left corner of a *paysage* 25 format (approx. 81 x 60 cm) perspective frame seems to have been drawn in the rather featureless area of the right foreground.[119] As with the small frame used in *By the Seine* (cat. 107), the frame segment must have been used to tackle a region that was difficult to draw. Here it involved a path that forks off steeply towards the right edge, away from an adjoining path that runs straight back into the distance. Van Gogh repeated this distinctive wedge-shaped construction of the foreground area in *Allotments in Montmartre* (fig. 115a), but now apparently drawn without the assistance of a perspective frame since no evidence was found for its use.[120] The artist's correspondence reveals the importance that he attached to getting the foreground areas just right. Writing to his pupil Anton Kerssemakers he said: 'What I wanted to say in connection with your new studies is that for the sake of the foregrounds, in particular, which always seem to me to be too insubstantial and prevent there being enough space in them, is that I suggest it would be very good if you also gave it a try with a perspective frame, for there's nothing like it for *teaching one to look* and *teaching one to feel* perspective' [518].

– Compositions without perspective

Although Van Gogh always kept to the term 'perspective frame' in his correspondence, it very often seems invalidated by the particular way in which the tool was used. Among the pictures examined, *View from Theo's apartment* (cat. 95 and fig. 48) provided a rare example of the frame being used in a conventional way. The horizontal thread across the frame window defined the level of the distant Paris skyline, and a prominent building (the Palais du Trocadéro) coincided with the vanishing point of the composition where the threads crossed. This way of alining the frame with the cross-point of the threads used to focus the eye onto a significant point on the horizon was termed 'alining' (*braqueeren*), as Van Gogh had mentioned in a letter some years before [254]. In most of the other pictures examined, however, he deliberately hid the vanishing point of the composition with a shielding element, such as a fence (cat. 92), the brow of a hill (cat. 93), cornfields (cat. 110) or dense thickets (cats. 111, 112), in order to block out the distant view and eliminate any marked sense of depth.

On the one hand, pictures like *The bridge at Courbevoie* (cat. 108) strongly suggest that Van Gogh simply did not grasp the laws of perspective used in the traditional sense.[121] In this painting, he tackles the problem of rendering a foreshortened bridge that recedes at an angle. Yet despite the aid of a perspective frame, the result is highly unconvincing: its pier-to-pier sections look more like flat segments than adjoining parts of a continuous diagonal structure.[122] On the other hand, in other landscapes painted in the summer of 1887, he seems to have deliberately avoided the need to draw marked linear perspective. Instead he preferred to lay out the scene in bands organised parallel to the picture plane.

One example is *Wheatfield with partridge* (cat. 110), where the landscape is laid out in three horizontal zones (sky, a wheatfield and foreground grass). Partially visible graphite lines suggest that a *paysage* 12 frame was drawn onto the middle of the *figure* 15 canvas, its horizontal axis establishing the horizon line along the surface of the wheat that divides the picture into two halves. In the finished picture, the bottom half is again sub-divided into two horizontal bands of vegetation, a simple scheme that could have been readily drawn with a ruler instead. Despite the flat arrangement of the landscape, some feeling of space is given by the partridge that

119 Using the stereomicroscope, small sections of the frame contours could be pinpointed in between brushstrokes in the verge borders to the right of the point where the two paths converge in a wedge in the foreground. A left diagonal is also apparent, running up to a short horizontal line by the sheds in the middleground, which probably marked the point where the threads of the frame intersected. Extrapolating these measurements suggests that the frame may have had a *paysage* 25 format. There is very limited evidence for contouring of elements within the corner of the frame once it had been drawn up, and the few lines of underdrawing present do not obviously relate to the painted landscape.

120 Elisabeth Bracht, formerly Head Paintings Conservator at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam informs us that examination of the painting during recent treatment, revealed only a very loose sketch in thin grey paint, with some random squiggles in the foreground area. There were no traces of lines from a perspective frame.

121 Van Uitert 2002 poses the argument that Van Gogh's inability to grasp traditional perspective was symptomatic of his autodidactic roots, but that he was able to cleverly turn mistakes to his advantage in order to strengthen expressive effect.

122 Early on, Van Gogh had realised that the frame was only helpful if one had a feeling for the principles of perspective, otherwise looking through it 'makes your head spin' [254].

has flown up just to the left of the vanishing point where the threads of the perspective frame would have crossed (only the left diagonal is apparent).

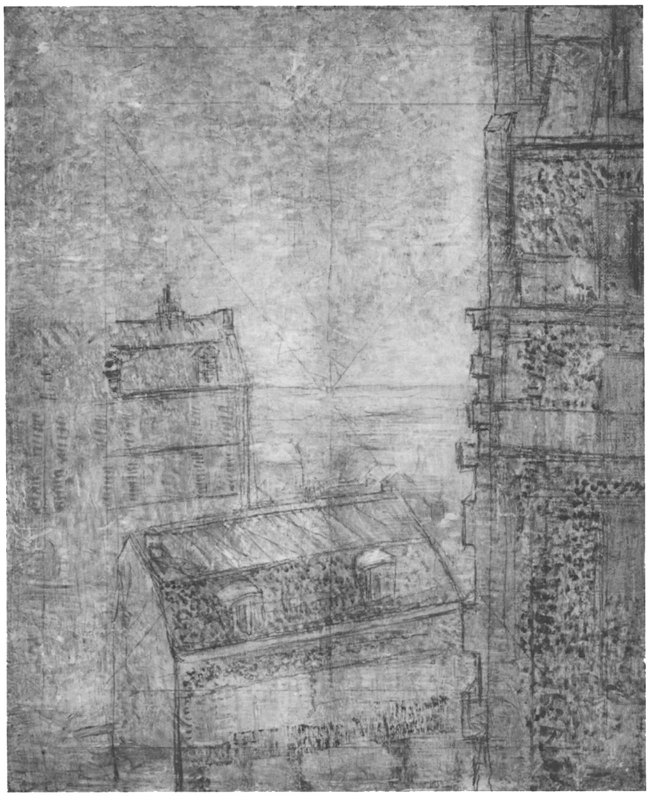
Two contemporary studies of *Trees and undergrowth* (cats. 111, 112) also reveal some cursory outlines from a perspective frame, here effectively used to structure the highly contained space of the enclosed thickets. Different-sized trees were drawn at key points in relation to the contours of the frames, punctuating the space at measurable intervals. In cat. 111, for example, the crossed threads of the *figure* 6 perspective frame coincide with the crown of the farthest tree, flanked almost symmetrically by two others standing closer by. In cat. 112, a tall tree trunk is anchored down the right inner edge of the *paysage* 12 perspective frame, marking the scale of the foreground area. In both works, orchestrated zones of light and shadow also help to articulate the shallow depth portrayed. Furthermore, differentiated dabs of colour that portray the effect of dappled light filtering through the densely knitted foliage, provide edge-to-edge patterning in a tapestry-like effect which also serves to emphasise surface above pictorial illusion.

– 'Composition' or perspective frame?

The combination of the above observations suggests that Van Gogh only occasionally used the perspective frame in the traditional sense, namely to create the illusion of pictorial depth using the laws of geometric perspective. In the pictures that do incorporate receding elements, he often seems to have abandoned the principles of correct perspective, either through misunderstanding or in favour of expressive effect. Often though, he opted for a planar compositional scheme instead. For these decidedly flat designs, the term 'perspective frame' hardly seems to fit the role that the tool played, though it was exploited in a deliberate way. Examinations disclosed how the lines dividing up the picture area had served as handy reference points, helping to establish the main scheme of his motifs, and to transpose solid forms onto a flat surface in correct proportions, in the way he had described [254]. Appropriately, such devices were also referred to as 'composition' frames, a term that seems better suited to Van Gogh's particular use of them.

Yet even as a composition frame, Van Gogh did not employ the tool in a conventional manner. Normally the first step was to seek out an appropriate motif viewed through the window of the frame (so-called framing, or *encadreeren*). As the artist explained, this procedure had the advantage of singling out the area of interest, blocking out adjacent objects that might otherwise confuse the beginner's eye [518]. In a very direct approach, though, he went so far as to trace the actual frame onto his canvas supports, subsequently encroaching on the traced wooden bars as he sketched in his motif. This strange practice introduced an illogical discrepancy between the actual view seen through the frame window and that contained by the window traced onto his canvas (normally the view outlined by the frame window corresponded to the picture area). This was evidently overlooked in favour of other practical advantages. Importantly, it was not only the threads stretched across the window, but also the traced inner and sometimes outer contours of the frame that could now be used as convenient reference points to structure the scene.

Among the works examined, *View from Theo's apartment* (cat. 95 and fig. 48) formed an exceptional case. Study of its underdrawing revealed that Van Gogh began to sketch the subject onto the canvas in some detail, running over the borders of the traced frame in his normal manner. Down the left side, however, the underdrawing of the building stopped abruptly along the inner contour of the frame, rather than continuing right up to the edge of the canvas. It seems as if in the process of drawing Van Gogh suddenly had the idea of reducing the area of his composition, and wanted to test the effect. The result must have pleased him, since



48 Infrared reflectogram, *View from Theo's apartment* (cat. 95).



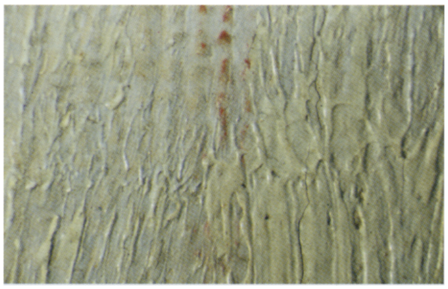
49 *View from Theo's apartment* (F 341a JH 1243), 1887. Private collection. Some lines of underdrawing from a perspective frame are faintly visible.

he took over the smaller field of view framed by the window in a following painting of the same subject (fig. 49). For his second picture, he similarly employed a *figure* 6 perspective frame traced onto the middle of a *figure* 8 canvas. He must have simply stepped back slightly into the room, until the view that first filled just the window of the frame now occupied the entire canvas. Van Gogh's use of the frame to implement compositional improvements as he went along seems to fit in well with his usual pragmatic approach.

– Aid towards rapid execution

Van Gogh's writings on the topic of the perspective frame reveal that he also considered it an important aid for speeding up the working process. In a letter extolling the virtues of the frame to Anton Kerssemakers, he proclaimed: 'The old painters always used the perspective frame a lot; it IS the shortest way' [518], and elsewhere: 'With CONSIDERABLE practice and with *lengthy* practice, it enables one to draw at lightning speed and, once the lines are fixed, to *paint* at lightning speed' [254]. Bearing in mind the limited scope of this survey, the paintings examined do seem to demonstrate Van Gogh's growing proficiency in the use of the frame, coupled to a swifter technique.

The earliest pictures considered, painted between March and May of 1887, still display a rather diligent approach. In each case, examination disclosed a careful and rather complete tracing of the frame, coupled with an extensive sketch of the subject (cats. 92, 93, 95, 102, 103, 107). With one exception, *Boulevard de Clichy* (cat. 94), even the thinly painted *à l'essence* style paintings (cats. 92, 93, 95) were prepared with a detailed graphite or charcoal underdrawing, allowing the dark lines to play through to the picture surface in places. For these pictures, the initial sketch



50 *The bridge at Courbevoie* (cat. 108). Enlarged detail showing the inner edge of a perspective frame traced in red paint which is visible at the picture surface.



51 *Flowering plum orchard: after Hiroshige* (cat. 131). Enlarged detail showing grid lines with the number '26' at the left edge, visible at the picture surface.

must have provided a useful framework for the loose dots and dashes of colour to be filled in within its boundaries. Often the drawn outlines were reiterated in paint, affirming the contours of the elements depicted. In *Basket of pansies* (cat. 102) and *Horse chestnut tree in blossom* (cat. 103), though, the particularly exuberant underdrawings are more loosely followed in the finished paintings.

Compared to the above examples, the landscapes that followed in the period May to July 1887 seem to illustrate a new trend. In works such as *The bridge at Courbevoie* (cat. 108) the frame was now traced onto the canvas in a highly abbreviated way, apparently with no additional underdrawing. Amongst the pictures examined, this work is exceptional in that red paint (rather than the usual carbon black drawing material) was used for the traced outlines (fig. 50).[123] Microscopic examination reveals broken dots of colour that caught onto the surface of the fabric along the inner edge of the frame, with a horizontal axis drawn across its window (there was no indication for vertical or diagonal lines). The fact that the red dots of colour were picked up by subsequent brushmarks on top indicates a rapid procedure. In addition, the absence of further preparatory drawing supports the idea of a very direct impression recorded on the spot.

Two roughly contemporary studies of *Trees and undergrowth* (cats. 111, 112) similarly appear to have virtually dispensed with the stage of preliminary underdrawing. Only some cursory outlines of a perspective frame are evident. They were used to establish the basic scheme of the compositions, and again there is no evidence that Van Gogh went on to make a more elaborate sketch.[124] Instead it seems that by now he was able to draw and model with the brush in one go, applying judicious dabs and touches of colour in just the right spot, with no smudged corrections. This fast and direct approach was entirely in keeping with the aim of these *plein-air* views, which was to capture transient light effects.

In the 1887 works discussed above, the trend towards minimal underdrawing of the frame and motif, coupled with a remarkably direct technique, perhaps indicates that Van Gogh came to depend less on the perspective frame as a learning device as time went on. Some four months after leaving Paris, in June 1888, he proclaimed that he had advanced to the extent that he could now finish a drawing on the spot '*in an hour*', even without the use of a perspective frame [620].

123 SEM-EDS analysis of a sample from the red paint showed that it contained vermilion and red lead, almost certainly a ready-mixed colour used straight from the tube. Aluminium silicates were also present, presumably a filler material added to the tube paint.
124 Only a few possible sketchy lines for the foliage were tentatively observed in cat. 111.

Tracing and scaling-up technique

Besides the perspective frame, Van Gogh employed another traditional method in order to transfer an image from one medium to another. This involved tracing original print motifs onto translucent paper, squared up for enlargement and transfer onto another support. Probably all three of the large painted copies made after Japanese prints in late 1887 were based on this tracing and scaling technique, which, as further examinations may tell, he is likely to have returned to in Saint-Rémy when creating his colour 'translations' of prints after Rembrandt, Delacroix and Millet.[125] Uniquely, two of the actual squared *papier calqués* used for the Paris works survive (cats. 131, 133). Whilst the physical characteristics of these tracings have been described in detail in Drawings 3, Appendix 1, supplementary technical investigation of the paintings now adds to our knowledge of how they were used. A combination of surface examination using the stereomicroscope and infrared reflectography revealed grids drawn onto the surfaces of the corresponding picture supports that were used to square up the traced images.

In the case of *Courtesan: after Eisen* (cat. 133), the pencilled grid was used to roughly double the size of the original printed image, presumably by doubling the size of the 1 inch squares of the grid on the tracing.[126] Only short sections of the horizontal and vertical grid lines are evident now, in between areas of dense paint, without the diagonal axes drawn on the print tracing, at the key positions of the hand and foot for example. Using the pencilled grid as a guide, Vincent drew in the contours of the courtesan image using thinned bluish green paint that was also applied in broader washes.

Examination of *Flowering plum orchard: after Hiroshige* (cat. 131) revealed a pencilled grid with mainly 3/4 x 3/4 inch squares drawn onto the surface of the primed canvas. This was used to enlarge the image by a half with respect to the squared tracing that showed a grid with 1/2 x 1/2 inch squares. Van Gogh numbered each row and column on his canvas with ciphers that corresponded to the squared tracing, using a dark fluid medium and possibly graphite along the bottom (fig. 51). With the aid of the grid he then drew in the main elements of his design in graphite, afterwards strengthening contours with dark painted lines.[127]

For the third picture in the series of *Japonaiseries, Bridge in the rain: after Hiroshige* (cat. 132), painted lines of underdrawing were detected by technical examination, but no transfer grid. Nonetheless it is thought that a similar squaring-up procedure was employed, and that the grid may simply have been drawn onto the picture surface with a material that cannot be revealed by the usual investigative techniques.[128] A comparison of the measurements of Hiroshige's print with those of the painted version suggests that the traced image was enlarged by transfer from a grid with 1 x 1 inch squares on the print to a grid with 1.75 x 1.75 inch squares on the canvas itself.

Use of colour (Table 7)

Past attempts to describe the transformation that took place from the sombre tones of Van Gogh's Dutch paintings to the bright colour schemes of his Paris works have not been informed by factual knowledge of the pigments used and how these may have altered over time. To gain an insight into these features, tiny samples were taken to investigate the composition and build-up of paint layers viewed in cross-section, coupling results to observations made on the pictures themselves. Often microscopic examination of samples revealed an elaborate range of ingredients (up to 12 pigments and extenders) mixed together for any one particular colour, not all of them intended by the artist. Some pigments may already have been combined to adjust the tint of the tube colour during manufacture, whereas others could be

125 So far only one of these Saint-Rémy-period copies in the Van Gogh Museum collection has been examined for underdrawing, namely *The raising of Lazarus (after Rembrandt)* (F 677 JH 1972). Stereomicroscopic examination revealed preliminary contours drawn with a carbon black, probably charcoal medium, but no lines associated with the use of a grid system were observed. Examination was performed by Devi Ormond in October 2005. The remaining works in question will be investigated in preparation for Paintings 3.

126 The unit of one inch was known as the *pouce* in the French pre-metric measuring system. Van Gogh's reversion to the old-fashioned system of measurement to construct his transfer grids for both cats. 131 and 133, may be explained by the use of grid papers based on the *pouce* unit for his tracings of the prints. The grid squares pencilled onto the print tracings seem to have been loosely traced from an underlying sheet rather than constructed by connecting marks made with an inch ruler. The tracing method produced squares of somewhat variable dimension which however, generally conform closely to the French *pouce* of around 2.7 cm (slightly longer than the English inch of around 2.54 cm).

127 Infrared reflectography clearly distinguished the pencilled from the dark painted lines.

128 It is possible that the transfer grid was drawn with the same dark liquid medium used for the preliminary sketch of the composition, now scarcely apparent on the dark grey ground. Alternatively, Van Gogh may have chosen a light-coloured material to show up the grid lines clearly on the grey ground, such as white chalk, which would not be revealed by infrared reflectography.

present as accidental 'contaminants', picked up and transferred by the artist's brush moving across the surface of the palette or painting, a common outcome of Van Gogh's rapid technique.

Given the sheer quantity of data collated from 93 paintings, as well as the frequently complex build-up and composition of samples, it has been decided to present the results as a simple list of the individual pigments and extenders identified for each work. Although this information is selective, examined chronologically it enables us to highlight some main trends in Van Gogh's changing palette for the period, providing a framework for further research. Besides revealing which pigments had been used, paint cross-sections also provided more qualitative information to increase our visual understanding of how Van Gogh had mixed and applied his colours. These findings are discussed for each colour below, as well as in the separate essay 'Developing technique and style'.

Blues

This study revealed that in Antwerp and Paris Van Gogh essentially kept to the three types of blue that were described on his very first 'practical palette, with sound colours' in The Hague in 1882, namely cobalt and Prussian blue, supplemented with some ultramarine [253]. He also used cerulean blue, a pigment that was not mentioned in his Hague correspondence but which has already been identified in a picture of that early period too.[129] However, his preference for one or other type of blue varied in the pictures examined, shifting over time.

– Cobalt blue

Van Gogh's letters suggest that it was in Antwerp that he came to discover the potential of cobalt blue, an exceptionally pure and bright blue colour that was also stable. It was very expensive though. Tanguy sold it for four times the price of Prussian blue (named Berlin blue), as well as of mineral blue, a particular variety of Prussian blue pigment (fig. 1).[130] In late December 1885, Van Gogh declared: 'The most expensive is still sometimes the cheapest. Cobalt especially – it can't be compared with any other blue as regards the delicate tones that one can get with it' [549]. He made generous use of it in the clothing and backgrounds of two female portraits (cats. 47, 48), handled in a brighter and more spacious way than was usual for his dark Nuenen studies of peasant heads. Yet rather than exploiting the uniquely pure blue tone of the pigment, especially in cat. 46, he combined it with warm ochres and emerald and viridian green to provide a greenish cast reminiscent of other, cheaper types of blue. Alternatively, he diluted it with white for the insipid blue shade of the woman's dress in cat. 47, for example. Besides cobalt, artificial or French ultramarine blue was still used in the mixed dark colours of some other Antwerp portraits that kept to an old-fashioned Nuenen style (cats. 45, 46), and Van Gogh also reported that he had to use Prussian blue mixed with carmine to render jet-black hair in another female portrait [550].

129 SEM-EDS analysis identified cerulean blue used in the sky of *A girl in a wood* (F 8 JH 182). RCE work number 2005-066, documentation file 2005/077.

130 Later 19th-century sources consistently describe mineral blue, otherwise known as Antwerp blue, as essentially a lighter variety of Prussian blue, though its composition could vary. Carlyle 2001, pp. 474, 475.

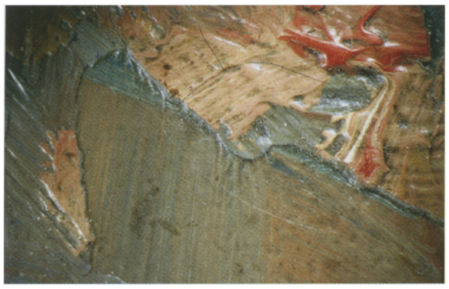
– Prussian blue

Appropriately, less expensive Prussian blue was chosen as the main pigment for the background areas in a series of studies after plaster casts (cats. 57-63 and the underlying composition in cat. 69), painted in mid-June 1886 using a small range of pigments on cheaper *carton* supports. In addition, the high tinting strength of the pigment would have made it economical to use.[131] Subtle modelling was achieved by mixing the blue with varying proportions of white and traces of vermilion to create a greenish tint that was very pronounced in the foreground of *Torso of Venus*, for example (cat. 63). A greenish undertone was also a known feature of Prussian blue paint, however, which moreover was reputed to change hue and fade, making it unsuitable for artists working with a palette based on pure bright colours.[132] Prussian blue had other negative connotations too, since it had been popular among early 19th-century academic painters for use in dark glazes, causing some Impressionist painters to deliberately avoid its use.[133] A letter that Van Gogh wrote in Arles reveals that he was aware of painters' general loathing for Prussian blue (and citron yellow), though at the same time he could quite understand Delacroix's infatuation with it due to the 'superb' colours that it gave [595], reflecting other late 19th-century opinion that, despite its drawbacks, it was almost indispensable on the palette.[134] Still, the poor reputation of Prussian blue might explain why Van Gogh went on to favour French ultramarine instead for his subsequent Paris paintings (found almost six times more often in the works sampled), despite the fact that the two blues were closely matched in terms of cost and working properties.[135] Another reason may have been that he was disenchanted with the quality of Prussian blue paints that he was able to obtain, both in Holland, where he referred to the lighter variety known as mineral blue [532], and later on with the tubes purchased from Père Tanguy [597].

– Cerulean blue

Another greenish blue pigment present on Van Gogh's palette in the Paris period was cerulean blue, here meaning the manufactured cobaltous stannate pigment, though imitations were known. It was identified on ten, possibly eleven pictures, dating from spring 1886 (cat. 55) to late 1887. In each case elemental analysis showed that, besides the expected cobalt and tin, the cerulean blue particles were combined with significant quantities of magnesium. This could be explained by the addition of magnesia during manufacture of the pigment as described by Thomas W. Salter in his 1869 revised edition of George Field's *Chromatography*.[136] Cerulean blue features in several of the pictures made in the spring of 1887, using very thin veils and touches of colour applied on the light grounds. The limited tinting strength of the blue pigment was compensated by this *à l'essence* technique, which employs the luminosity of the ground to impart intensity to overlying colours. In paintings such as *Plaster cast of a woman's torso* (cat. 87) and *Flowerpot with garlic chives* (cat. 80), where cerulean blue is mixed into the background areas, the greenish cast of the pigment was exploited to provide a soft complementary contrast for other secondary orange and cobalt violet hues that featured in their colour schemes. Cerulean blue paint was generally noted as difficult to work with, since it had a very dense body, yet in these works it was adjusted to a thin, fluid consistency.

131 On the properties of Prussian blue see Berrie 1997.
132 Carlyle 2001, p. 476. See Kirby/Saunders 2004 for a recent investigation of fading and colour changes of Prussian blue.
133 Callen 2000, p. 148.
134 Carlyle 2001, p. 476.
135 On French ultramarine blue see Plesters 1993.
136 Carlyle 2001, p. 472.



52 *Vase with Chinese asters and gladioli* (cat. 71). Detail of flaking loss in the left foreground, exposing a first version of the table top which, despite its similar appearance, was laid in with a different palette. Keeping to a pink and blue colour scheme, Van Gogh substituted the greenish blue pigment, cerulean blue, with a mixture of cobalt blue and cadmium yellow in the finished picture.

A paint sample shows that the pure pigment was used in a medium-rich underlayer for the tablecloth in *Carafe and dish with citrus fruit* (cat. 89), for example, which was subsequently wiped thin.[137] An unusually thick, and greasy-looking layer with pure cerulean blue was applied for a first version of the tablecloth in *Vase with Chinese asters and gladioli* (cat. 71). This may account for the poor adhesion of the paint on top, which must have flaked off almost straight away since it was consequently retouched in places by the artist (fig. 52). In the second version of the table, Van Gogh mixed a similar blue colour using cobalt blue with cadmium yellow instead, reflecting the opinion that cerulean blue was fairly dispensable on the palette, since its greenish tint could easily be imitated by mixtures with other blues.[138]



53 *Flame nettle in a flowerpot* (cat. 67), detail of background. Van Gogh used the relatively dark and transparent French ultramarine pigment in the mixed greyish blue underlayer, reserving the more expensive, bright cobalt blue pigment for the basket-weave patterning on top.

– Combined use of blue pigments

Sampling often revealed that Van Gogh used two or three of these different types of blue pigment to create varied hues in different areas or layers of a painting. Usually it appeared that the relatively dark and transparent French ultramarine had been mixed into duller paint areas, whereas the expensive and bright cobalt blue was reserved for select accents. For example in *Flame nettle in a flowerpot* (cat. 67), ultramarine was mixed into the greyish blue background layer, with cobalt blue used for the brighter patterning in basket-weave strokes on top (fig. 53). Similarly in *In the café: Agostina Segatori in Le Tambourin* (cat. 84), ultramarine was mixed into thin grey underlayers in the background, with cobalt blue brushstrokes sketching the colourful kimonos in the decorative Japanese prints.

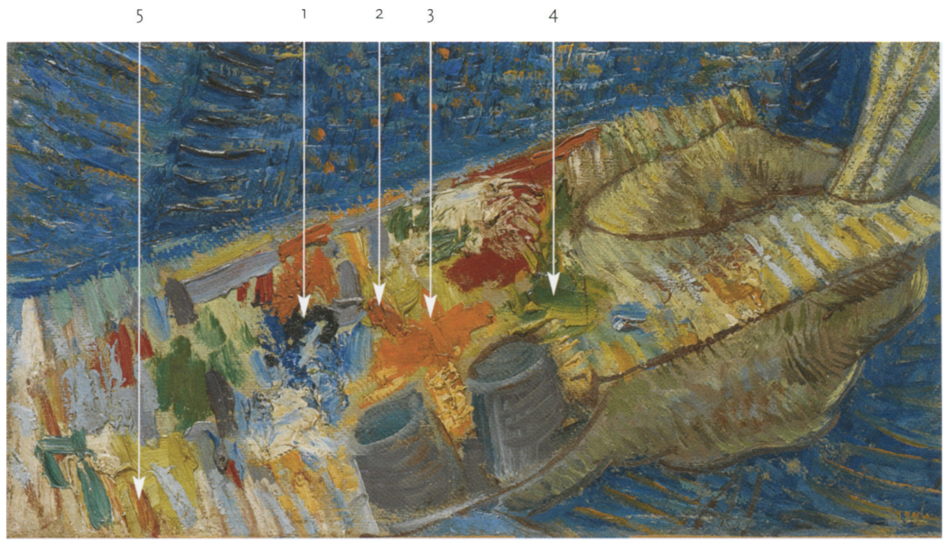
Van Gogh used several blues for the portraits he made in the summer of 1887 as well, returning to the theme of a sitter in blue clothing set against a blue backdrop that he had tackled in Antwerp, but demonstrating a new approach to maximise the impact of the colour. A mixture of three types of blue was found in a sample taken from the deep blue jacket in *Portrait of Theo van Gogh* (cat. 121), whereas Prussian blue was identified as the principal pigment in the dark blue backdrops of the self-portraits (cats. 116, 119). In these pictures, Van Gogh heightened the intensity of the blue by introducing pure yellow accents (straw hats or tufts of hair), a primary colour that also stood far apart in terms of brightness, establishing strong oppositions of colour and tone that were even effective when the colours were quite thinly applied on a relatively dark pinkish brown ground (cats. 119 and especially 116).[139]

Three different blue pigments were used for some late 1887 still lifes too, mixed together in the large onion of *Red cabbages and onions* (cat. 135), or allocated to various touches of light turquoise, deep greenish blue, and darkish blue colour in the densely patterned surroundings of *Apples* (cat. 126), where contrasting touches of warm colour were added on top. However, bright cobalt alone was retained as the essential blue in two pictures made at the end of the Paris period using a simplified range of high-key colours. It was mixed with lead white for the decorative border of *Courtesan: after Eisen* (cat. 133), for example, and is the only blue pigment on the palette of *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 137 and fig. 54).

Yellows and oranges

From this survey it appeared that genuine Naples yellow, a pigment already present on Van Gogh's palette in Holland, was used up to the summer of 1886 only. Gradu-

137 William Jabez Muckley, in the 1893 edition of his *A handbook for painters and art students*, instructed that, 'It should [...] always be employed with varnish as a medium, when squeezed from the tube, as its tendency is to become dry on the surface'; see Carlyle 2001, ibid.
138 See the opinion of Sir Arthur Herbert Church published in *The chemistry of paints and painting*, London 1890, cited in Carlyle 2001, ibid.
139 This approach recalls Théophile Silvestre's early account of how Eugène Delacroix, when painting a Pietà in a dark chapel, had resorted to the use of Prussian blue for the shadows with pure chrome yellow for the lights in order to provide a lively effect. Van Gogh cited that passage in a letter of 1885, saying that it had given him so much pleasure to read [526]. See Silvestre 1864, p 96.



54 *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 137), detail of the artist's palette.
1 dark on bright blue: two layers with various mixtures of cobalt blue and lead white.
2 darkened orange on light yellow: multiple layers with the orange consisting of red lead and vermilion and the yellow of various mixtures of cadmium yellow, zinc yellow, chrome yellow and lead white.
3 light orange: cadmium orange.
4 darkened red on green: cochineal lake on tin substrate with starch, on top of emerald green with gypsum.
5 orange-red on light yellow: vermilion with a little red lake on a layer of zinc yellow and lead white.

ally it was ousted by brighter alternatives, especially the chrome pigments that were relatively cheap but unstable, and the cadmium ones that were expensive but believed to be more permanent. Whereas chrome orange and cadmium yellow already occur in his Antwerp pictures, chrome yellow was not found before June 1886, and zinc yellow not before mid-1887 in the works examined.

– Naples yellow

Naples yellow was reportedly included in Van Gogh's very first palette for oil painting composed in The Hague [253], and the genuine lead antimonate pigment has been identified in several pictures made in Holland.[140] Here it was found in two Antwerp paintings, probably the 'good brilliant yellow' that he described using in the period [549], as well as in three Paris ones that date to the spring and summer of 1886.[141]

Naples yellow pigment provided a rather insipid colour, often with a distinctive pinkish to brownish orange tinge.[142] Characteristically then, it was nearly always found as an ingredient of a mixed dull colour rather than being exploited for its intrinsic hue. It was incorporated in the mixed darks of two Antwerp pictures that were still painted in the Nuenen manner, *Portrait of an old man* (cat. 45) and *Head of a skeleton with a burning cigarette* (cat. 50), whereas a more progressive work, *Houses seen from the back* (cat. 49), shows the use of the brighter alternatives of cadmium yellow and chrome orange instead. In some early Paris works it appears in subdued layers of underpaint reminiscent of a traditional *ébauche* lay-in of the design. It is found in dark liver-coloured underpaint for the path in *Path in Montmartre* (cat. 55), in the dark foliage of *View from Vincent's studio* (cat. 56), and in warm-toned underpaint for the hill in *The hill of Montmartre with stone quarry* (cat. 65), where brighter cadmium yellow is used for the mixed green layer on top.

Subsequently, however, Naples yellow seems to have been displaced by chrome yellows and to some extent cadmium yellows in the pictures examined – pigments that offered a more opaque and intense hue. Equally, though, while the genuine pigment disappeared from his palette at this time, one cannot rule out the possibility that Van Gogh switched to one of the cheaper surrogate varieties based on a different type of yellow pigment, mixed with white and toned with a little ochre or vermilion to achieve an equivalent tint.[143] Père Tanguy listed both the genuine *Jaune d'Antimoine* pigment, and a (presumably false) *Jaune de Naples* at only a quarter of the price, for example (fig. 1).

140 Genuine Naples yellow has so far been identified in six paintings of the Nuenen period in the Van Gogh Museum collection: F 49 JH 534, F 53 JH 538, F 61r JH 533, F 82 JH 764, F 107 JH 933 and F 109r JH 942. Samples from five of them were analysed by Elisabeth Jägers, microanalytical laboratory, Bornheim, Germany, report dated 18 December 1998. Analysis of paint samples from *The potato eaters* (F 82 JH 764) was carried out at the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE), formerly the Central Research Laboratory, in Amsterdam, and the results published in Hummelen/Peres 1993, pp. 52, 61.
141 The term 'jaune brillant' was, however, also used to describe a mixed substitute consisting of lead white and cadmium yellow; see Fiedler/Bayard 1986, p. 66.
142 On the properties of the genuine lead antimonate pigment see Wainright *et al.* 1986.
143 Ibid., p. 235.



55 *Houses seen from the back* (cat. 49), detail of the passsage at upper right. The sky was laid in with a light orange-pink layer containing chrome orange and zinc white, which is visible along the contour of the roofs where it has dripped down. Contrasting light yellow and green strokes were applied on top, containing the expensive bright yellow pigment, cadmium yellow.



56 *Quinces, lemons, pears and grapes* (cat. 128), detail of the original painted frame. Van Gogh changed the colour of the frame rebate (seen on the left) from bright red, which is still evident where it peeps through to the surface, to a yellow scheme. The yellow base coat consists of zinc yellow with a little orange ochre (probably a ready-mixed tube colour), patterned with contrasting strokes of chrome yellow on top. The current greenish hue of these final strokes seems to be partly due to discoloration.

– Chrome yellow and orange

Like the more expensive cadmium pigments, chrome pigments were available in shades ranging from a very light lemon yellow to a medium orange hue.[144] By far the most common type used by Van Gogh was the yellow lead chromate, mixed into the dark dress of the early Paris *Portrait of a woman* (cat. 53), and still used on the palette depicted in the late *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 137). However, the orange variety of the lead chromate pigment, chrome orange, was used roughly three times less often than chrome yellow in the pictures examined. An early example is the Antwerp *Houses seen from the back* (cat. 49), where it was mixed with zinc white for the striking pinkish orange underlayer of the sky (fig. 55).

– Zinc yellow

The zinc potassium chromate pigment, zinc yellow, seems to have been added to Van Gogh's palette later, around the middle of 1887 in the works examined. It offered a more transparent lemon yellow shade, probably equivalent to the type 1 chrome yellow specified as 'lemon yellow' in his later paint orders [593].[145] The pigment was first identified in *Path in the woods* (cat. 109), and occasionally in other paintings right up to the late *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 137), where it occurs in the light yellow patch on his palette. Again, this must be the 'lemon yellow' he mentioned having used for the picture [626].

– Combined use of zinc and chrome yellow

Zinc yellow and chrome yellow were often found combined in the pictures examined. They were mixed into the broad yellow strokes applied in the background of *Skull* (cat. 100), for example, or alternated to provide the subtle range of yellow tints in *Quinces, lemons, pears and grapes* (cat. 128). Uniquely, the latter picture still has its original painted frame, prepared with a base coat consisting of zinc yellow with a little orange ochre (probably a colourman's recipe) unevenly mixed with lead white. This warm yellow underlayer provides contrast for the greener strokes of chrome yellow applied in a basket-weave pattern on top (fig. 56). However, judging from Van Gogh's depiction of the frame in the background of his 1887 *Portrait of Père Tanguy* (fig. 128e), this effect may now be accentuated by discoloration of the chrome yellow stripes that originally had a more primrose hue. Remnants of chrome yellow paint transferred onto the edges of *Self-portrait with straw hat* (cat. 125) provide evidence for a similar painted frame, now lost. Originally, the yellow frame would have echoed the colour of his straw hat and formed a powerful contrast to the purple background and clothing, both of which are severely faded now.[146]

Repeatedly, examinations of Van Gogh's Paris pictures brought to light areas of chrome yellow paint that had darkened at the surface to a greenish brown (cats. 106, 115, 127, for example) or more blackish hue (cat. 134), in contrast to spots of fresher colour that had been preserved under the frame rebate.[147] Van Gogh's letters reveal that he was aware of the notorious reputation of the chrome yellow pigments. In April 1888 he assigned the three chrome yellows (orange, yellow and lemon shades) to the category of unstable colours brought into fashion by the Impressionists, as opposed to the healthy colours found on the Dutch palette of

144 On the properties of chrome yellow and orange pigments see Kühn/Curran 1986 and London 1990-91, p. 69.
145 Several late 19th-century sources identified citron yellow as a zinc chromate; see Carlyle 2001, p. 523.
146 Similar evidence was found for a chrome yellow frame originally surrounding the 1887 portrait on *carton* of *Alexander Reid* (F 343 JH 1250); see Van Tilborgh 1995, p. 164.
147 See Kühn/Curran 1986 for the discoloration of lead chromate yellows on pp. 190, 191, and zinc chromate yellow on p. 202. See also Casadio *et al.* 2008 and Monico *et al.* 2011.

57 *Red cabbages and onions* (cat. 135). Detail of an onion with light yellow accents that contain cadmium yellow and white pigment. The original colour scheme involved powerful complementary yellow-violet contrasts, but the violet has altered to pale blue due to fading of a fugitive cochineal lake on tin with starch component.



Jacob Maris [595]. His willingness to use them ran counter to the trend of other painters in the 1880s, who deliberately avoided them. Auguste Renoir habitually used genuine Naples yellow instead, and Claude Monet preferred cadmium yellow for his later paintings, for example.[148]

– Cadmium yellow and orange

The expensive cadmium sulphide pigment was among the new colours that Van Gogh purchased in Antwerp, where he wrote: 'It's false economy to do without them, those colours. Cadmium likewise' [550].[149] The yellow variety of the pigment has been found mixed into light yellow and green brushstrokes in the sky of *Houses seen from the back* (cat. 49 and fig. 55), which virtually cover the chrome orange layer beneath.

Available samples from the Paris works often showed the cadmium yellow incorporated in a mixed colour, as in the pink cloud and green hill of *The hill of Montmartre with stone quarry* (cat. 65), the pink table in *Vase with Chinese asters and gladioli* (cat. 71), a light blue stroke in the background of *Vase with gladioli and Chinese asters* (cat. 70), and the pink seaweed in *Prawns and mussels* (cat. 72). In the flower still lifes (cats. 70, 71) it is also thought to have been used for the bright saturated yellow of the asters, but it was not possible to sample these areas for confirmation. Cadmium yellow was mixed with white for the light yellow accents in the onions of *Red cabbages and onions* (cat. 135 and fig. 57), which originally stood in complementary contrast with the purple tablecloth. This effect is now undermined by faded cochineal lake in the purple colour, however. An intimate mixture of cadmium yellow and red lake, probably made at the manufacturing stage, provides the particularly vivid colour of the orange in *Carafe and dish with citrus fruit* (cat. 89). It is the only example of this combination found so far. A light orange-yellow shade of the cadmium sulphide pigment was identified in a patch of paint on the palette of *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 137 and fig. 54), though the colour was not among those Van Gogh mentioned having used for the portrait [626].[150] X-ray diffraction of a sample of the pigment revealed that it was an unusually pure crystalline variety, derived from the natural mineral greenockite, also without added white or extenders.[151]

148 Callen 2000, p. 147, and London 1990-91, pp. 64, 70.

149 There is analytical evidence for the fact that he had already used cadmium sulphide yellow in a painting made in The Hague, however. The pigment was found in an elaborate mixture used for a green layer of underpaint in *Still life with an earthenware pot and clogs* (F 63 JH 920). RCE work number 2005-066. Documentation file 2005/064.

150 SEM-EDS analysis of a sample showed the presence of cadmium and sulphur only, without the selenium that may be present in redder shades of the manufactured pigment.

151 XRF analysis of the pigment was performed by Aviva Burnstock of the Courtauld Institute of Art and Technology, in collaboration with Pieter Hallebeek at the former Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage in Amsterdam (now RCE). See Burnstock *et al.* 2003. On greenockite see Fiedler/Bayard 1986, pp. 66 and 75.

Reds and violets

– Red lead and vermilion

As for other late 19th-century painters, the staple inorganic red pigment used by Van Gogh was vermilion (mercuric sulphide). Found in most pictures examined, it offered an extremely powerful and dense orange-red hue.[152] More unusually however, the orange-red pigment known as minium (the mineral form) or red lead (for the artificial variety) was also used. Red lead was generally avoided by painters because of its renowned instability.[153] Moreover, it was not universally available as an artists' colour and was not listed by Tanguy for example, though Vincent's later paint orders inform us that he could obtain it from Tasset et L'Hôte.[154] Red lead was not found before 1887 in the pictures examined, the earliest example being *Portrait of Agostina Segatori* (cat. 83) where it was mixed into the bluish grey background.

In several samples, red lead was found mixed with vermilion, possibly a colourmaker's mixture with the red lead present as an adulterant, a known practice since early times.[155] This was confirmed where homogeneous mixtures of both pigments occurred in samples thought to represent the straight tube colour, used to trace the outlines of a perspective frame onto the canvas support of *The bridge at Courbevoie* (cat. 108 and fig. 50), or to depict a patch of orange-red paint on the palette of *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 137 and fig. 54), for example. Van Gogh only recalled using vermilion for the latter self-portrait, perhaps supporting the notion that the red lead was present as an unsuspected adulterant [626].

On the other hand, sampling also demonstrated that both red lead and vermilion must have been present separately on the artist's palette, and indeed later he is known to have ordered both colours separately.[156] For example, red lead and vermilion were used both individually and mixed in various proportions for the range of orange to reddish orange hues in the foliage of *Courtesan: after Eisen* (cat. 133), whereas the impasto touches depicting poppies in *Wheatfield with partridge* (cat. 110) and the bright orange decorative border in *Flowering plum orchard: after Hiroshige* (cat. 131) consist of red lead alone.

In many of these examples the densely saturated hue of red lead was used to provide striking orange-green complementary contrasts, as in the late *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 137), where the opposition of pure emerald green and red lead patches of colour on the palette is echoed by the tips of his brushes dipped into paint, as well as by the green of his eyes and the orange of his beard. Unfortunately, however, such effects may now be undermined by surface discoloration and sometimes increased translucency of the paint containing red lead, which has turned to a dull ochreish colour on the palette of this portrait, or a milky grey in *Wheatfield with partridge*, for example. Surprisingly, a sample from *Red cabbages and onions* (cat. 135) showed that red lead pigment particles had turned brown even when encapsulated in a layer of underpaint, rather than being exposed to light or gaseous pollutants at the picture surface. In *Quinces, lemons, pears and grapes* (cat. 128), degradation of the red lead pigment has caused the orange paint to take on a dull ochre shade, and an unintended gritty texture. These changes are obvious in the fine lines that detail the signature and date, as well as the stripes on the lemons (figs. 58, 59).[157]

– Red lakes

Like other painters of his day, Van Gogh was attracted to the translucent red lake pigments for their striking intensity and colour saturation, complementing the more opaque pigments of vermilion and red lead on his palette. Analysis revealed that in Antwerp and Paris he used exclusively red lake pigments derived from natural sources (i.e. plants or animals).[158] The synthetic lake of eosin known as gera-

152 On this pigment see London 1990-91, pp. 67, 68, and Gettens *et al.* 1993.

153 In the 1887 edition of *The artist's manual of pigments*, H.C. Standage concluded that minium was altogether unsuited to the artists' palette: see Carlyle 2001, p. 510. On its instability see also Fitzhugh 1986, p. 113. Though generally avoided by the Impressionists it was, unusually, found on the palette that Camille Pissarro used in the mid-1870s; see Callen 2000, p. 148.

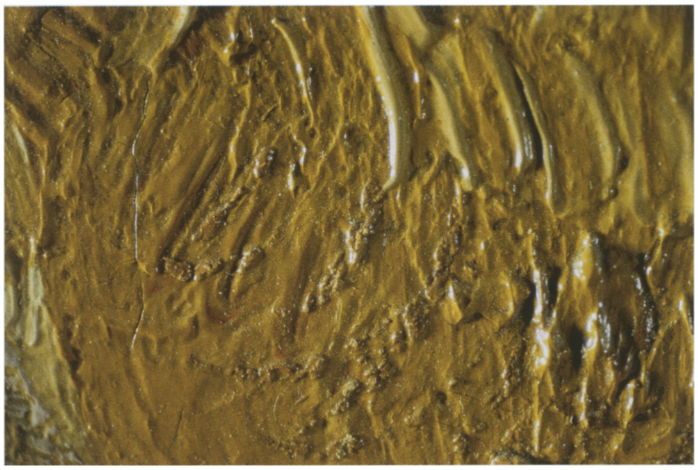
154 Van Gogh later referred to the variety of pigment called orange lead in his letters and paint orders; see letter 593, for example. Orange lead could be a synonym for red lead, but more commonly the term refers to the finest, or purest, red pigment prepared from lead white. Orange lead is also said to have a finer texture and lighter colour than minium. See Fitzhugh 1986, p. 110.

155 In his 1841 improved edition of *Chromatography*, George Field reported that red lead was often confounded 'even in name' with vermilion, with which it was formerly mixed; see Carlyle 2001, p. 510. On early confusion between the two see also Fitzhugh 1986, p. 109.

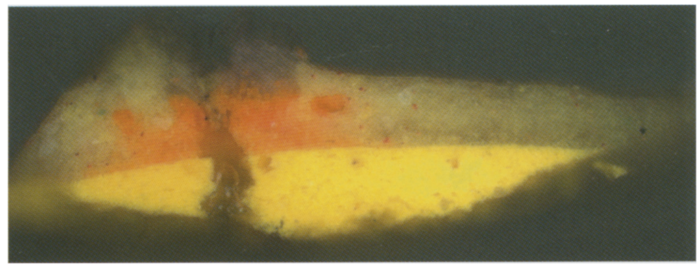
156 See, for example, letter 593, in which he ordered tubes of both orange lead and vermilion.

157 Darkening is thought to be caused by conversion of the red lead tetra-oxide pigment to black lead oxide, or brown lead dioxide, though there was insufficient sample material available to be able to perform X-ray diffraction analysis to confirm which is the case in these examples. On these conversion products see Fitzhugh 1986, pp. 115, 116. For colour changes in paint films containing red lead see also Saunders *et al.* 2002. Increased transparency and the gritty texture of the paint containing red lead paint in cat. 128 were shown to be due to the formation of lead soap inclusions. For recent studies of this phenomenon see Higgitt *et al.* 2003 and Keune 2005. Nineteenth-century writers were also aware of these potential defects. In the 1887 edition of *The artist's manual of pigments*', H.C. Standage wrote that red lead loses its opacity with time, and most 19th-century writers reported that it was subject to blackening upon exposure to hydrogen sulphide. In his *Chromatography* of 1835, George Fields pointed out that red lead was extremely fugitive when mixed with lead white or any lead compounds, as is the case for cat. 128, where it intermingled wet-into-wet with an underlayer of lead chromate yellow and lead white. See Carlyle 2001, p. 510, for these 19th-century references.

158 For publications discussing the results of this investigation of the red lake paints used by Van Gogh in Antwerp and Paris, see Van Bommel *et al.* 2005 and Burnstock *et al.* 2005 I.



58 *Quinces, lemons, pears and grapes* (cat. 128). Raking light detail of fine stripes on the lemons, showing a fine gritty texture caused by the transformation of red lead pigment to lead soap protrusions (see fig. 59). The bright orange colour has also changed to a dull ochre shade.



59 *Quinces, lemons, pears and grapes* (cat. 128). Paint cross-section from one of the protrusions in the fine stripes on the lemons (see fig. 58). The particles of red lead pigment have presumably converted to lead soap material, erupting through the paint surface.



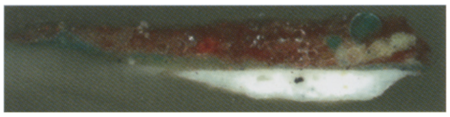
60 *Portrait of an old woman* (cat. 46). Detail of the right edge of the portrait, where the removal of a short section of paper tape (present since 1929) discloses a purple colour underneath. In the main part of the background, light exposure has caused the purple to turn a pale bluish grey, as a small cleaning test to remove the old yellowed varnish shows. This marked colour change is due to fading of the madder with redwood lake mixed into the purple paint. Also evident is a long coiled hair, possibly belonging to the artist or the woman depicted, which became embedded in the fresh paint.

nium lake, which Van Gogh is known to have employed from the Arles period onwards, was not yet encountered.[159] The use of purpurin, presumably Kopp's purpurin (an extract from the root of the madder plant), and cochineal (derived from the coccus species of dye insects) predominated. However, madder (also derived from the madder root) and redwood (from sappanwood or brazilwood) lakes also occurred.[160] These dyestuffs were associated with substrates containing tin, aluminium and calcium in the samples analysed, resembling similar lake pigments used by Georges Seurat, Auguste Renoir, Adolphe Monticelli and Claude Monet.[161] Both the ingredients (dyestuff, lake substrate and possible additives) and the precise conditions of manufacture determined the particular shade of the red lake paints obtained, and also affected their permanence to light.[162] Traces of vermilion were often added as well to adjust the final tint. Some main patterns in Van Gogh's use of these different types of red lake are outlined below.

– Madder with redwood lake

Exceptionally, a madder lake was identified in the Antwerp *Portrait of an old woman* (cat. 46), where it was mixed into the background colour. Up to the late 19th century, the madders were considered the most superior lake sort, due to their bright and relatively stable colour. However, their high cost and the fact that they were exacting to prepare made them especially vulnerable to adulteration, as was the case here.[163] Samples revealed that redwood, an inferior lake that was known to

159 Van Gogh's use of eosin-based lakes is discussed in Hofenk *et al.* 1993 and Rioux 1999.
160 On madder lake and madder extracts see Schweppe/Winter 1997.
161 For Seurat see Kirby *et al.* 2003, pp. 25, 26. Aviva Burnstock personally supplied information on red lake samples from paintings by Renoir and Monet in the Courtauld Gallery, London. Jo Kirby, formerly of the Scientific Department of the National Gallery in London, informs us that cochineal on a tin substrate with a starch extender, similar to that used by Van Gogh, was identified in four paintings by Monticelli dated between c. 1870 and 1886 (NG 5010 and 5013-5015).
162 For the relative permanence of different red lake pigments see Saunders/Kirby 1994. For ageing studies of the red lake types used by Van Gogh see Burnstock *et al.* 2005 I.
163 Carlyle 2001, p. 509.



61 *Small bottle with peonies and blue delphiniums* (cat. 68), paint cross-section. The top layer is from degraded red paint containing redwood with starch and a little Kopp's purpurin lake (see fig. 62).



62 *Small bottle with peonies and blue delphiniums* (cat. 68). The same paint cross-section viewed in ultraviolet light revealing the spherical starch particles that fluoresce blue.



63 *Small bottle with peonies and blue delphiniums* (cat. 68). Enlarged detail of the brushstroke from which the paint cross-section illustrated in figs. 61 and 62 originated. The streaks of red lake pigment, irregularly mixed into the brushstroke, have deteriorated to a brownish yellow crust.

fade rapidly and discolour, has been added to the madder, accounting for the dramatic shift in the background colour of this portrait from a deep purplish grey, which is still preserved where the edges of the painting have been covered by tape since 1929, to an insipid bluish grey in the central area (fig. 60). Clearly the original colour would have brought the portrait more in line with the dark backdrops that had characterised his Nuenen studies of peasant heads, rather than with the brighter and more spacious handling that he developed in subsequent Antwerp portraits (cats. 47, 48).

– Redwood and Kopp's purpurin lake

Redwood lake, mixed with starch extender, was also present as an adulterant for Kopp's purpurin in two flower still lifes painted in the summer of 1886: *Glass with yellow roses* (cat. 69) and *Small bottle with peonies and blue delphiniums* (cat. 68 and figs. 61, 62). The very high tinting strength of Kopp's purpurin (50-55 times that of madder) made it economical to use,[164] and together these relatively cheap materials seem to fit the informal nature of these small studies on *carton*. Regrettably, though, the inferior quality of the red lake pigment has led to pronounced degradation of some thickly applied strokes in particular, and now it is only recognisable as a brownish yellow crust (fig. 63).[165]

– Kopp's purpurin lake

Kopp's purpurin was used throughout the Paris period, usually mixed as a minor component with cochineal lake, but also alone. It is a relatively stable lake sort, so when solidly applied as a pure glaze it has generally kept its colour well. Good examples are the liquid touches detailing the flame patterning of the leaves in *Flame nettle in a flowerpot* (cat. 67), or the final red glaze in the background of *Glass with yellow roses* (cat. 69), which is applied over a dark (rather than light reflective) layer that must also have helped to preserve it (figs. 32, 64).

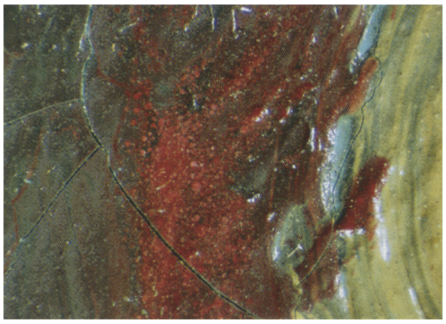
– Cochineal lake on a substrate containing aluminium and calcium

The most common lake used by Van Gogh however was cochineal, found alone, but usually with a slight addition of Kopp's purpurin. The cochineals identified could be divided into two main types. The first, more stable sort was prepared on a substrate containing aluminium and calcium. This aluminium-based cochineal was found in just three Paris pictures, two dating from the summer of 1886 (cats. 64, 70), and one from the summer of 1887, *Kingfisher by the waterside* (cat. 123), where the cochineal was in fact used for the red painted border thought to have been added later by the artist. In each case the colour is well preserved, as in bright red touches on the gladioli depicted in *Vase with gladioli and Chinese asters* (cat. 70), where it is combined with Kopp's purpurin.

– Cochineal lake on a tin substrate

The second, less stable cochineal sort was prepared on a tin-based substrate, some-

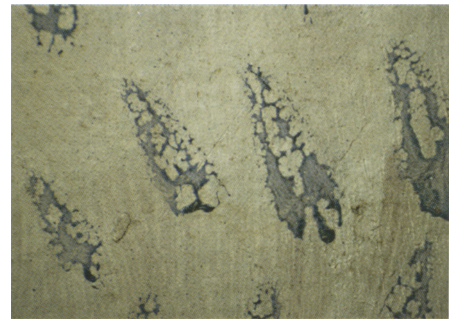
164 Schweppe/Winter 1997, p. 122.
165 The red lake paint has tended to turn brown where it was more thinly applied.



64 *Glass with yellow roses* (cat. 69). Enlarged detail where the red glaze in the background area overlaps the still life. The relatively stable Kopp's purpurin lake has kept its colour well, assisted by the fact that it was applied quite thickly and on a dark underlayer (see fig. 32).



65 *Courtesan: after Eisen* (cat. 133). Enlarged detail of the toad, showing characteristic degradation of cochineal lake on a tin substrate with added starch when thickly applied. The red lake paint exhibits deep stress cracks, with a faded and blanched surface leading to loss of colour intensity.



66 *Self-portrait* (cat. 98), detail of the background area. Fading of a thin glaze with cochineal lake on tin with starch reveals the light, primed *carton* support. The reticulated texture of the blue brushstrokes applied on top (which have kept their colour) suggests that they did not properly wet the surface of the medium-rich glaze.

times with aluminium or calcium present in addition. Without exception, sample cross-sections showed that this tin-based cochineal paint contained considerable quantities of starch.[166] This particular lake, not found prior to January 1887 in Van Gogh's paintings examined so far, went on to become his most popular choice. It must have owed its appeal to its spectacularly vivid scarlet hue, as well perhaps to its characteristically dense (rather than transparent) quality, which would have provided greater hiding power and more even coverage. Van Gogh used the pure scarlet colour for a prominent, relief outlining of features (cats. 84, 137), or to fill in flattish, full-bodied areas of colour as part of a decorative scheme (cats. 131, 133 and fig. 65). Alternatively the tin-cochineal pigment was incorporated in a mixed violet, with lead white and often cobalt blue (perhaps with some French ultramarine too), providing striking complementary contrasts with yellow areas (cats. 102, 135, 136).

Ironically, however, this particularly alluring tin-based cochineal has been subject to the most severe forms of degradation. Where the pure crimson colour was thickly applied it now shows marked cracking and a weathered surface that contributes to its faded appearance by the scattering of incident light (fig. 65). Though the artist considered that applying colours solidly and without added oil [538], or 'boldly to use them too raw' [595], would compensate for long-term change, clearly such measures have only helped to a certain extent. Where the cochineal lake on tin was applied as a thin glaze, however, its colour has faded almost entirely, as in the backgrounds of two self-portraits (cats. 98, 125 and fig. 66) where increased visibility of the picture supports now lends them a peculiarly unfinished look. The red lake has also severely faded when mixed with white into paint areas that were originally violet. Though evidence for the original hue may still be found at the edges of a picture that have been protected from light, it has generally faded to an insipid bluish or greenish grey colour (cats. 102, 135, 136 and fig. 67).

These observations on how the particular way in which Van Gogh applied his red lake paints has influenced their long-term permanence seem to agree with the expectations of 19th-century writers on the topic. Although it is not clear whether the cochineals referred to by these authors exactly correspond to those used by Van Gogh, their comments are consistent with the effects witnessed on his paintings. For example, George Field remarked in his *Chromatography* of 1835 that cochineal lakes were impermanent in tint with lead white and 'in glazing are soon discoloured and destroyed by the action of light'. Thomas W. Salter, however, in his 1869 revised edition of Field's *Chromatography*, stated, 'When well-made, pure,



67 *Portrait of Etienne-Lucien Martin* (cat. 136). Detail of the purple colour preserved under the frame rebate down the right edge of the painting. Within the main picture area this has altered to a pale bluish grey due to fading of the cochineal lake on tin with starch component.

166 The presence of starch grains was indicated by their appearance in paint cross-sections viewed under the microscope.



68 *Café table with absinthe* (cat. 90). Enlarged detail of rainbow stripes of pure colour in the chair back. Violet, green and orange predominate, that is to say the secondary colours on the colour circle. A fine pointed brush was used to draw across the vertical stripes of wet colour, causing them to intermingle.

and employed alone and in body, it has been known to retain its colour for years'. Sir Arthur Herbert Church, in his *Chemistry of paints and painting* published in 1890, wisely concluded that 'Beautiful and rich as are the colours prepared from cochineal, not one of them should ever find a place upon the palette of an artist. No artist who cares for his work and hopes for permanency should employ them'.[167]

– Cobalt violet

Cobalt violet (cobalt phosphate) pigment offered a more durable alternative to mixtures of blue with red lake. It may have been quite hard to obtain as an artist's colour, however, since it was only mentioned in colourmen's catalogues from around 1896 on, and does not appear on Tanguy's list, for example (fig. 1).[168] In every case elemental analysis of samples from Van Gogh's paintings showed the cobalt violet to contain high levels of zinc. Since analysis of reference samples revealed the same feature, this may be considered to offer a characteristic though not unique fingerprint for his paints. The pigment was identified in six pictures dated quite close together, from January to mid-April 1887 (cats. 80, 86, 87, 89, 90, 94), executed in a thin watercolour-like technique. The cobalt violet in these pictures makes a distinctive contribution to the secondary colour schemes based on opposing contrasts of orange, green and violet (fig. 68).

Sample analysis from a purple stroke in *Boulevard de Clichy* (cat. 94) showed, besides the expected ingredient of cobalt violet, a fugitive mixture of the organic pigments cochineal and indigo, as well as possibly a little red lead and cobalt blue (fig. 69). Natural indigo was similarly identified in conjunction with tin-based cochineal in a purple area of *Portrait of Etienne-Lucien Martin* (cat. 136), again presumably added by the manufacturer to adjust the tint of the cochineal, though this could not be confirmed from samples.[169] Fading of both components is likely to have affected the precise shade of the colour left now.

– Methyl violet

Exceptionally, the synthetic organic purple known as methyl violet was identified in the dark layer that Van Gogh applied to cover up a rejected composition in *Glass with yellow roses* (cat. 69), probably as an unwitting manufacturer's ingredient in the elaborate mixture of tube colours (fig. 32).[170]

167 Carlyle 2001, p. 507.
168 On the availability of cobalt violet see Carlyle 2001, p. 503. The Impressionists did not generally use the pigment, though it has been identified in paintings by Claude Monet; see London 1990-91, p. 64. It has also been found by analysis of paintings by John Russell, though the artist did not include it on his drawing of an ideal Impressionist palette of 1887, and may have adopted its use later on; see Dredge 1996, pp. 269, 270. Cobalt violet was also one of the pigments mentioned as present on Paul Signac's prismatic palette of c. 1885; see Callen 2000, pp. 153, 154.
169 Though the natural and synthetic varieties of indigo are hard to differentiate by analysis, the synthetic variety may be excluded in this case since it did not become commercially available until 1897. See Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, p. 129 and note 52.
170 Methyl violet is a synthetic colourant that was first marketed in 1866, consisting of a mixture of tetra, penta and hexa methylated pararosaniline, see Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, p. 129.



69 *Boulevard de Clichy* (cat. 94). Enlarged detail of runny paint in the façade, illustrating the *à l'essence* technique. The main ingredient of the purple paint is cobalt violet, a relatively stable pigment that has kept its colour well, despite the fact that it was thinly washed onto a light reflective ground.

Greens

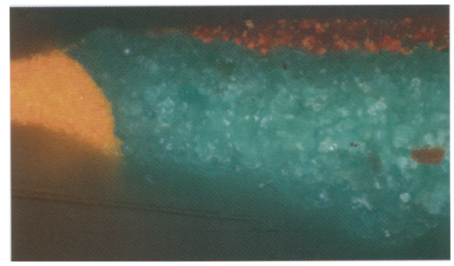
– Viridian and emerald green

Two different types of green pigment featured throughout the period investigated: viridian (a transparent chromium oxide pigment) known in France as *vert émeraude*, and true emerald green (copper acetoarsenite pigment) called *vert Véronèse*.[171] Most samples showed a combined use of these two pigments, perhaps already mixed during manufacture of the tube colour rather than deliberately by the artist.[172] It is quite possible, for example, that tubes labelled *vert émeraude* (costing four times as much as *vert Paul Veronèse* on Tanguy's price list, see fig. 1), in fact consisted largely of the cheaper copper acetoarsenite pigment. Alternatively, in some pictures it seems that Van Gogh had exploited the different properties of viridian and emerald green pigments used apart by having them as separate colours on his palette.

Viridian offered a powerful, deep cold green, which, since it was transparent, was particularly useful for pigment mixtures. Often, then, it was found as an ingredient of a mixed dark paint, such as the glazed shadow added around the *Vase with Chinese asters and gladioli* (cat. 71), or in the denser dark brown colour of the background in *Prawns and mussels* (cat. 72). In the panoramic *View of Paris* (cat. 66), unusually, viridian is incorporated with red lake in a translucent greenish scumble, which, once the picture was dry, was washed over the foreground architecture to provide a unifying tone that set it apart from the cooler distant view. In *The hill of Montmartre with stone quarry* (cat. 65) viridian was mixed with cadmium yellow for the green of the hill, but usually emerald green (alone, or with some viridian added) was the preferred choice for more saturated greens in view of its uniquely powerful hue, unequalled by any other single green pigment or mixture.

In *View from Vincent's studio* (cat. 56) and in *Sunset in Montmartre* (cat. 91), for example, viridian was identified in several mixed colours, whereas emerald green was reserved for the areas of bright green foliage or grass respectively. Emerald green, used in conjunction with white and chrome yellow pigments, provided the soft pastel shades of mint green and primrose yellow in the brightly sunlit *Exterior of a restaurant in Asnières* (cat. 105), for example, or, together with chrome orange, the striking opposition of avocado green foliage accentuated by orange streaks and spots of light in *Horse chestnut tree in blossom* (cat. 103). *Bank of the Seine* (cat. 106) shows a few consistent shades of green and yellow, colours that seem to have come straight from the tube, distributed in varied brushmarks across the picture surface. The darkest green in the treetops consists of emerald green alone, while a more yellowish green shade also contained chrome yellow and lead white. Another *plein-air* landscape, the rapidly executed *Trees and undergrowth* (cat. 112), displays a more impulsive and variable mixing of several colours which, in addition to emerald green and sometimes viridian, included mixed greens with chrome yellow and ultramarine or Prussian blue. Together this provided a sophisticated range of dull grey, bright yellow, sage and mint greens.

The most striking example of pure emerald green is given by the *Japonaiseries* series, however, where its vibrant hue provided essential contrast to a select number of other high-key pigments: red lead, cobalt blue, chrome yellow and tin-based cochineal lake. Each of these undiluted colours featured in turn for the decorative



70 *Flowering plum orchard: after Hiroshige* (cat. 131). Paint cross-section from the junction of the decorative orange and red border, and the green field. The sample reveals the use of pure colours direct from the tube, providing striking contrasts. The orange consists of red lead pigment, the transparent red colour contains tin-based cochineal lake (with starch) and Kopp's purpurin lake containing aluminium with a little vermilion, and the green consists of emerald green (with gypsum).

171 On emerald green see Fiedler/Bayard 1997. For chrome oxide greens see Newman 1997. The identification of emerald green was based both on the presence of copper and arsenic found by SEM-EDS analysis, and on the 'doughnut' shape of the pigment particles evident in paint samples (distinguishing it from the pigment containing copper and arsenic, Scheele's green). Similarly, the identification of viridian was based both on the presence of chromium found by SEM-EDS, and on the distinctive shade and transparency of the pigment particles viewed in paint samples (distinguishing it from the opaque form of chrome oxide green).

172 Similar mixtures have been found in samples from Impressionist paintings, see London 1990-91, pp. 61, 62.



71 *Small bottle with peonies and blue delphiniums* (cat. 68). Enlarged detail of the foreground area, where a streaky brown underlayer shows in between loose brushwork. Umber was identified in the layer, making this the last Paris work in this particular study in which the brown earth pigment was found.

borders of the prints, setting the tone for the particular colour scheme based on the same restricted palette: a red lead border set off against the emerald green field in *Flowering plum orchard: after Hiroshige* (cat. 131 and fig. 70), an emerald green border outlined and inscribed with cochineal lake in *Bridge in the rain: after Hiroshige* (cat. 132), and a figurative border containing cobalt blue water that contrasts with the emerald green water-lily leaves in *Courtesan: after Eisen* (cat. 133).[173] In the first example (cat. 131), the prominent use of red and green complementary colours that are naturally close in tone adds to the especially flat decorative character of the painting. Similarly vivid contrasts occur on the palette of *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 137), where a patch of pure emerald green merged with an orange colour (identified as cochineal lake with vermilion) that formed its opposite hue. Van Gogh used his palette to embody the 'modern' principles of using 'whole' colours, that is to say the six primary and secondary colours [626], forming complementary pairs.[174]

– Chrome green

Virtually no evidence was found for Van Gogh's use of chrome green, which was a manufactured, homogeneous mixture of chrome yellow with Prussian blue. This was limited to a single paint sample from *Quinces, lemons, pears and grapes* (cat. 128), where the chrome green was used in the underlying composition.[175]

Blacks

The use of pure black, a 'non-colour' that was not present in nature, was a controversial topic in the late 19th century. Whilst Impressionist painters officially banned carbon black from their palette, analysis of their paintings has confirmed that in practice it lingered, in small amounts, for some time.[176] In keeping with this trend, analysis of samples from Van Gogh's Antwerp and Paris pictures showed that carbon black played only a minor role, with dark mixtures of opposing coloured pigments predominating instead. Nevertheless, traces of carbon black, often distinguished as bone black by its calcium phosphate content, were found in the dark paint mixtures used in his portraits that were more academic in style (cats. 53, 54), or self-portraits (cats. 74, 77), as well as in the subdued colours of the *ébauche* stage of some early landscapes painted in a conventional style (cats. 64, 65).

Occasionally, though, black also seemed to feature as a colour in its own right in the Paris pictures examined, where it was used for a graphic outlining of forms (cats. 49, 84, 91), or for larger areas of clothing in two female portraits (cats. 49, 83). Indeed, Van Gogh's correspondence in different periods reveals that, though aware of artists' discussion on the topic of using black, he continued to justify its use as a legitimate colour, based on the example of other painters.[177] In three Paris works it was possible to sample these ostensible blacks (cats. 83, 84, 91), showing that the principal ingredient of the colour was bone black, combined with slight additions of other, generally transparent coloured pigments (such as viridian, ultramarine and red lake, perhaps with a little fine vermilion too).[178] The black painted border that Van Gogh added down the left edge of *Head of a prostitute* (cat. 48) for experimental effect, similarly comprises a tinted black, with bone black as the main ingredient.

173 The assertion that emerald green is used for the water lilies in cat. 133 is based on viewing only, since no sample was available for analysis.
174 The meaning of the phrase 'the only whole colours' used by Van Gogh in his letter to his sister Willemien [626] is discussed in the catalogue entry on this work.
175 For chrome green see London 1990-91, p. 63.
176 London 1990-91, pp. 71, 72, 90. For Renoir's use of black see Burnstock *et al.* 2005 II, pp. 63, 64.
177 Following a visit to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam in late 1885, he expressed strong admiration for the work of Frans Hals, whom he considered a great colourist, in view of the rich varieties of black he used: 'But – tell me – *black* and *white*, may one use them or not? Are they forbidden fruit? I think not. Frans Hals must have had twenty-seven blacks' [536]. Later, in Arles, in a discussion with the painter Emile Bernard, he expressed a shared opinion that black and white should be considered as real 'colours', providing contrasts just as pronounced as those of orange and green, for example, and announced his intention to experiment with unmixed bone black paint [622].
178 Sometimes the coloured pigments may be introduced as accidental contaminants, or by a wet-into-wet painting technique, rather than deliberately mixed with the black on the palette to adjust its tint. One example is the sampled dress of *Portrait of Agostina Segatori* (cat. 83), where red lake pigment was incorporated in the bone black paint when a thin black layer was applied on top of a very thin red one that was still wet.



72 *View of Paris* (cat. 66). Enlarged detail of the final touches of lead white impasto (with a slight addition of cadmium yellow) used to create textured highlights in the clouds.

Earth pigments

By analogy with carbon black, the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists also considered earth pigments unsuitable for high-key painting. Accordingly, although different shades of earth pigment (yellow, red and brown) have regularly been found in samples of dark paint from Van Gogh's Dutch paintings, this study confirmed the expectation that they came to play only a minor role in his Paris works painted in a high-key manner. Umber was identified in just three early paintings: mixed into the dark background of the Antwerp *Portrait of an old man* (cat. 45), mixed with bone black and other pigments for dark shading in the academic-style *Portrait of a woman* (cat. 53), and present in the translucent brown *imprimatura* underlying the early still life *Small bottle with peonies and blue delphiniums* (cat. 68 and fig. 71).[179] However, different shades of iron oxide pigments were found as a minor ingredient of mixed paints throughout the Paris period, but they are most likely present as a colour-maker's ingredient in the tube paints used rather than deliberately added by Van Gogh.[180]

Whites and extenders

Samples very often provided evidence of white pigments and inerts incorporated during manufacture of the paint (either when making the pigment, or added afterwards by mixing), as was standard practice in the late 19th century. These relatively cheap ingredients acted as extenders for the more expensive coloured pigments, at the same time lightening the shade of their often intense hues. Furthermore, they modified transparency and handling properties of the paints. Van Gogh later remarked that Tanguy's colours tended to be more insipid than Tasset's, perhaps suggesting his use of extenders in excess [889].

– Gypsum

In the samples investigated, gypsum filler could be specifically associated with the forceful pigments of emerald green (cats. 103, 106, 132, 133, 137), where it appeared in the form of fine rounded particles in sample cross-sections, or chrome yellow (cats. 104-06, 113), where it was present in the characteristic form of needle-shaped crystals instead.[181]

– Starch

Alternatively, starch grains (up to 0.005 mm diameter) were inevitably found with the cochineal lakes on a tin-based substrate (cats. 53, 102, 115, 129, 133, 135-37), whereas coarser grains of starch (up to 0.015 mm) had been combined with redwood lake (cat. 67 and figs. 61, 62). The starch evidently helped to create some of the particular properties of the cochineal paints that must have had a particular appeal for Van Gogh, such as their relatively opaque colour and good handling properties, yet it seems that it was at the expense of reducing long-term permanence.[182]

– Barium sulphate

Barium sulphate was found as another common extender. Some samples of unmixed zinc yellow revealed the addition of an especially fine grade of barium

179 Umber was identified using SEM-EDS analysis by the presence of manganese as well as iron in brown particles.
180 Most often SEM-EDS analysis showed the presence of silicon and aluminium besides iron, suggesting a natural ochre pigment, though pure iron oxide pigments were also found. The analytical techniques employed could not discriminate between the natural variety of iron oxide and a synthetic Mars pigment.
181 This description is based on the particles viewed in paint cross-sections; no thin-section preparations were made. The rounded particles suggest that gypsum is present in detrital form, and the needles as the product of chemical reaction.
182 Though more thorough experimental research is required to confirm the precise impact of adding starch as an ingredient to the red lake paint, the following preliminary findings may be noted. When making historically accurate reconstructions of Van Gogh's red lake paints in a workshop coordinated by Leslie Carlyle, it was noted that adding starch at the point of grinding the lake pigment in oil made it easier to grind. It also reduced the transparency somewhat, producing a translucent rather than transparent paint. Subsequent artificial ageing tests of the reconstructed cochineal lake paints showed that the first signs of deterioration were most pronounced for the cochineals on a tin-containing substrate with starch. On the actual paintings by Van Gogh examined, the cochineal and redwood-containing lakes with starch have shown a tendency to form deep cracks where the pure lake has been thickly applied. Furthermore, the starch-containing cochineals often appear unusually sensitive to aqueous solutions, or even very mild organic solvents, prohibiting conservation treatments such as varnish removal in these areas. See Van Bommel *et al.* 2005 and Burnstock *et al.* 2005 I.

sulphate, perhaps indicating the synthetic variety known as *blanc fixe* (cats. 115, 125 and possibly 128), but usually more coarsely ground particles were observed, being the natural mineral pigment known as barytes. A surprising find was the inclusion of unusually large quantities of barytes in mixed colour areas of *Sunflowers gone to seed* (cat. 124), apparently the same coarsely ground material that Van Gogh had used to prime the cotton support (figs. 23-26). He must have mixed the barytes with his tube colours on the palette, either as a cheap extender or to manipulate the working properties of his paints. This represents the first evidence we have that Van Gogh might adjust proprietary materials by adding his own ingredients.

– Lead white and zinc white

Small quantities of lead white and zinc white were commonly found in paint samples in addition to these inerts. These traces of white pigments are often present in an elaborate mixture, so it is impossible to say whether they were colourman ingredients in the tube colours, or added later on the palette. From examination of Van Gogh's paintings it is clear that he did use larger quantities of both lead white and zinc white as separate colours in their own right, as his later orders for both types of tube paint confirm.[183] Although he repeatedly complained about the slow drying properties of zinc white [591, 631, 636], which generally caused other painters to avoid it,[184] he found that it had certain advantages for mixed colours [631]. He was presumably referring to the fact that it is both relatively transparent and has a more neutral tone than lead white – properties which made it a useful commercial extender for *couleurs fine*.

A striking example of Van Gogh's combined use of lead white and zinc white is his ambitious *View of Paris* (cat. 66), where the two whites were alternated in an elaborate build-up of five layers in the sky, skilfully exploiting the different properties of each pigment for pictorial effect. The translucent and colder zinc white was used for smooth purplish shading in the clouds, ending with yellowish impasto highlights with a coarse stringy texture characteristic of lead white, here mixed with a little cadmium yellow (fig. 72).[185] Van Gogh's painterly approach often ignored the principles of sound technique, in this case reversing the usual sequence of slow over fast-drying paints, for example, since the lead white lies on top. Nor did he follow contemporary advice to cover lead white with a zinc white layer that protects it, unlike his colleague John Russell, who seems to have done this quite consistently later on, perhaps for this very reason.[186]

Summary

Based on the analysis of samples from pictures covered by this survey, it seems that Van Gogh continued to use dull mixtures of pigments reminiscent of his Dutch palette right up to the late summer of 1886. The genuine Naples yellow, umber, ochre and carbon black pigments in question were mixed into *ébauche* underlayers (cats. 64, 65), or used for dark passages in academic-style portraits (cats. 53, 54). Though umber and Naples yellow were not found in pictures dating after that summer, dark colour schemes featuring carbon black still predominated in some self-portraits painted at the end of the year (cats. 74, 77). Gradually, though, from Antwerp on, these traditional pigments were ousted by brighter, more 'modern'

183 In letter 593, for example, he ordered 20 large tubes of silver white (*Blanc d'argent*) as well as 10 large tubes of zinc white. See Carlyle 2001, p. 512, for the terms *blanc d'argent* or silver white, which earlier in the 19th century had been used as a synonym for French white, a high-quality lead white that was manufactured in France.

184 Callen 2000, p. 103, discusses the fact that zinc white was not used by the Impressionists.

185 Paint manufacturers reportedly added zinc white to improve the handling of lead white, since it reduced its tendency towards stringiness. See Carlyle 2004, p. 46.

186 For example, H.C. Standage suggested in the 1887 edition of *The artist's manual of pigments* that zinc white be laid over lead white 'when that has dried, to preserve the latter from deleterious influences', quoted in Carlyle 2001, p. 517. For John Russell's practice see Dredge 1991, p. 24.

alternatives. Intense chrome and cadmium yellows came to replace the more insipid Naples yellow, and pure blue shades of French ultramarine and cobalt blue largely supplanted the greenish Prussian blue, for example. By early 1887 it seems that Van Gogh had established a core palette consisting of a limited range of vivid colours, echoing the transformation from a tonal to high-key palette that had taken place for the previous generation of Impressionist painters.

On the one hand this involved the use of staple, late 19th-century pigments like cobalt blue, French ultramarine, emerald and viridian green, chrome yellow or orange, cadmium yellow or light orange, vermilion, natural red lakes and lead white. On the other hand Van Gogh began using slightly more unusual pigments from early in 1887: pure red lead, cobalt violet and cerulean blue. Available evidence suggests that whilst cobalt violet featured in the *à l'essence* pictures made in the period January to mid-April 1887 (cats. 80, 86, 87, 89, 90, 94), it was subsequently replaced by violet mixtures that contained a fugitive tin-cochineal lake with starch instead. So far only one instance of methyl violet was found, in a dark underlayer in *Glass with yellow roses* (cat. 69), though the pigment might well have been used more often. Another unusual feature is Van Gogh's use of slow-drying zinc white as a separate colour on his palette, which ran counter to general contemporary practice. Essentially working with this same set of pigments right up to his departure for Arles, Van Gogh experimented with different ways of mixing and applying his colours to create vivid contrasts. This exploratory process is outlined in the essay 'Developing technique and style'.

It is striking that Van Gogh used several colours that were notoriously unstable, among them chrome yellow, zinc (citron) yellow, cochineal and redwood lakes, red lead and Prussian blue. Although his letters reveal a concern for the permanence of the colours he used, he was evidently forced to use inferior pigments for reasons of cost, or was won over by their particular appeal. This is in marked contrast to the uncompromising approach of contemporaries like Georges Seurat, Claude Monet and Auguste Renoir, who rejected the use of impermanent colours for more stable alternatives.[187] Also, Van Gogh's purchase of adulterated red lake paints, and some tube colours with considerable quantities of extender, indicate the use of low-grade materials. In one instance (cat. 124) it turned out that he had himself added barytes to his tube colours on the palette. Besides affecting the rheology of his paints, the added extender would also have the economic advantage that it bulked out his colours, reducing the quantity of tube paints required. Examinations often disclosed examples of unsound materials causing significant deterioration of Van Gogh's paint surfaces, mitigating the artist's intended effects of saturated colour contrasts and affecting the way in which we read his pictures today.

187 For example, see Kirby *et al.* 2003, pp. 24, 27, and Burnstock *et al.* 2005 II, p. 54.

Developing technique and style

Ella Hendriks

Technical evidence for dating

As outlined in the essay 'Establishing the chronology', cumulative types of documentary, iconographic, topographical and botanical evidence were employed to establish the chronology of the Antwerp and Paris pictures presented in this catalogue. Technical investigations also helped to establish a framework for dating, with the significance of the findings being carefully weighed in each case. Useful parameters are provided by the fact that Van Gogh worked with changing sets of materials throughout the period concerned. These are inventoried in the essay, 'Van Gogh's working practice: a technical study', and summarised in the section 'Changing materials' below. Such technical evidence proves helpful for suggesting a likely margin of genesis, not just for the visible images but also for underlying ones in recycled works. Furthermore, an examination of how these painting materials were put to use leads to a better understanding of the progression marked by changing style, which forms the main theme of this essay.

Changing materials

It is known that in earlier and later periods of his working career Van Gogh bought canvas on the roll, subsequently cutting the cloth into pieces that were combined with loose stretchers to create picture supports. Nowadays, detailed comparison of the fabric weaves and ground layers of individual paintings makes it possible to match up these supports cut from the same bolt of canvas, helping to reconstruct the sequence of the paintings.[1] In the present study this method led to the identification of several Antwerp picture supports cut from a common strip of pre-primed canvas that is thought to have been forwarded from Nuenen (cats. 45, 49, and the reused canvas F 272 JH 1183, p. 45, fig. 9).[2]

One important finding, though, is that Van Gogh later changed his working practice in a departure from the other periods investigated so far.[3] Detailed technical comparison of the Antwerp and Paris picture supports in the Van Gogh Museum demonstrates that it became his normal procedure to buy ready-made canvases individually from various sources, which reduces the likelihood of being able to match up paintings in this way. Still, it is possible to make a broad distinction between the commercially primed canvases purchased in Antwerp or Paris, based on a distinctive ground type for each city, as well as the use of a poor-quality, gauze-like canvas that so far seems to be exclusive to his Paris pictures. Another useful source of information is documentary evidence in the form of surviving retail stamps and labels recording where Van Gogh bought his Paris picture supports (Table 1). This backs the allocation of pictures to before (cat. 54), or immediately after his move to rue Lepic in early June of 1886 (cats. 56-59, 61-63, 68), since in both cases it seems that he simply visited the nearest shop down the street from his address at the time.

1 This method can usefully be applied to lengths of canvas primed both commercially and by the artist. See Paintings 1, pp. 21, 22, for Van Gogh's documented practice in Holland, although those primed canvases have not yet been subject to a comprehensive technical investigation. For the Arles period see Lister *et al.* 2001, and for Saint-Rémy Hendriks/Van Tilborgh 2001 II.

2 The weave match linking the canvas supports used for cats. 45, 49 and F 272 JH 1183 was identified using computerised methods developed through collaboration of the Van Gogh Museum with the Thread Count Automation Project at Cornell University and Rice University, USA. See Johnson *et al.* 2009, Conference Postprints (forthcoming), and Johnson *et al.* 2010 I, pp. 79980G-1-79980G-9. The further discovery of a weave match between these three Antwerp pictures and two late Nuenen works, namely F 111 JH 939, *Still life with bird's nests* and F 117 JH 946, *Still life with Bible*, provides added support for the idea that Van Gogh used a piece of canvas sent from Nuenen to Antwerp. However, a detailed comparative analysis of the ground layers present on the Nuenen pictures would be needed to confirm that the supports were indeed all cut from the same ready-primed canvas roll. See Johnson *et al.* 2010 II.

3 Dorn/Feilchenfeldt 1993, p. 280, incorrectly assumed that in Paris Van Gogh was probably already purchasing canvas from Tasset et L'Hôte by the metre only, as he is known to have done from the late Arles period on. They went on to conclude that a pre-stretched Paris canvas stamped in the middle by Tasset et L'Hôte must therefore be the work of an ill-informed forger, supporting their opinion that the 1886 still life *Vase with carnations* (F 243 JH 1129) is a fake.

It emerges from the works investigated that early 1887 was pivotal for Van Gogh's introduction of alternatives to off-the-shelf types of artists' canvas, and represents a turning point in his Paris output. From then on he began experimenting with different types of picture support, among them raw wooden panel (cats. 81, 82), unprepared *carton* (cat. 85), *carton* with an *à grain* priming (cat. 125), and thinly primed *à grain* canvas (cats. 87, 106, 119). As discussed below, these new choices might afford more absorbent substrates, often in conjunction with a slightly pronounced surface texture that could be exploited for pictorial effect. So far examinations have not disclosed these types of support being used for his 1886 Paris paintings. At the same time, one sees a reverse trend in his practice of recycling supports from failed pictures. Unlike the crude preparatory measures taken in the 1886 works examined, from early 1887 on he began carefully to scrape down the rough texture of existing paint layers, covering them up with even ground layers in order to provide a smooth surface on which to paint a new picture.[4]

Later in 1887, it also becomes possible to classify associated groups of paintings by means of their common support materials. These shared types of support must have been made or acquired by Van Gogh around the same time, and were used within a relatively limited period to produce works that are consequently fairly close in date. Examples include four paintings on matching cotton supports prepared with a barytes ground (cats. 124, 130, 133 and F 452 JH 1330) which are dated between mid-August and November 1887, two works on identical fine linen prepared with an absorbent calcium carbonate ground (cats. 131, 132) painted in October to November 1887, and three pictures cut from the same strip of pre-primed twill fabric (cats. 135-37) executed between November 1887 and February 1888. However, further argumentation is required in order to determine the more or less hypothetical sequence of paintings within each group with the object of fine-tuning the chronology of Van Gogh's oeuvre down to the level of weeks or even days considered here.

Another useful technical feature for grouping associated paintings turns out to be the identical composition of ground layers that Van Gogh applied to the front or back of existing pictures in order to cover them up for reuse. He evidently used a single batch of mixed paint to prepare several canvases at once, which he then used for new pictures made in fairly quick succession in a similar style (see Tables 3.7 and 5, and pp. 116-7). This should not be regarded as a rigid procedure, however, since he could always lay aside a prepared support for some time before using it again. This is thought to be the case with *Self-portrait with pipe and straw hat* (cat. 129). It is in a different style and seems to have been painted several months after the other paintings in the same cluster with identical intermediate grounds (cats. 99-102).[5]

In addition to the study of the picture supports, sample analysis of paintings provides a fingerprint of Van Gogh's changing palette to help date pictures on the grounds of the pigments used. One obvious limitation of this approach is the selective nature of sampling and analysis, which was brought home by the fact that only one instance of the use of the pigments methyl violet (cat. 69) and chrome green (cat. 128) emerges from the analysis of around 300 paint samples, so it is a practice which could easily have been missed. Bearing this limitation in mind, it seems

4 In spite of Van Gogh's careful disguise of failed compositions in two 1887 works (cats. 73, 74), renewed scrutiny of the X-rays in conjunction with other examination techniques enabled the underlying subjects to be identified for the first time, thereby suggesting when the initial pictures had been made. In the case of cat. 73, the hidden image is thought to be Van Gogh's first Paris living quarters in rue Laval, painted between March and June 1886. In the case of cat. 74 the underlying landscape resembles a view of the *Impasse des Deux Frères*, a subject he could have tackled in the summer to autumn of 1886.

5 *Self-portrait with pipe and straw hat* (cat. 129) is dated to late 1887 because of its simplified colour scheme and 'coarse' style of execution resembling other works from that period. The portrait was modelled with long, broad strokes of dry-textured paint that leave the white artist's ground visible overall in between, without the fine outlines and detailing observed in the three earlier works considered here (cats. 99-101).



1 *Vase with gladioli and Chinese asters* (cat. 70). Raking light detail.

likely that the exact chronological contours defined by the use of specific pigments will shift as more comparative results become available. Nevertheless, taken as a whole the results point to certain key moments when Van Gogh revised the composition of his palette, which provide a useful framework for dating.

The first of these moments occurred in Antwerp, where he bought new paints (cobalt blue, cadmium yellow, and a madder lake referred to in the letters as carmine) that featured in the bright colour schemes of several portraits and a landscape made there (cats. 47-49). The move away from the staple pigments of his more sombre Dutch palette was a gradual one, though, since they lingered on his palette for some time. Genuine Naples yellow and umber were occasionally found in pictures through to the late summer of 1886, whereas Prussian blue continued to be used throughout the Paris period. Van Gogh kept to these familiar colours for a work painted under instruction at the Antwerp academy, for example (cat. 50), and employed them for traditional stages of underpaint in several landscapes (cats. 55, 56, 64, 65) made in the spring and summer of 1886.[6]

A second turning point is marked by the bright new colours that Van Gogh introduced onto his palette in early 1887, which separate the pictures painted during the first and second years of his stay in the French capital. The new pigments identified in paintings dating from after January 1887 include red lead, cobalt violet and cochineal lake on a tin substrate (with starch), whilst current evidence suggests that zinc yellow was added to his palette later that year (first identified in a picture dated May-July 1887). The *à l'essence* style pictures made in the period January to mid-April 1887 form a distinct group characterised by their secondary colour schemes based on the pigments cobalt violet and cerulean blue, as well as an orange pigment, which in one case was found to consist of a manufacturer's mixture of cadmium yellow and cochineal lake (cat. 89). Sample analysis suggests that after that date Van Gogh no longer used cobalt violet, but violet mixtures consisting of blue and white pigments with the fugitive tin-cochineal lake instead.

1886, tradition versus modernity

Another important outcome of the research is an improved understanding of the ways in which style and technique evolved in Van Gogh's Antwerp and Paris pictures, affirming some established notions whilst contradicting others. For example, the shift away from the dark tonal pictures produced in Holland towards a liberated use of pure colour has generally been presented as a radical leap that was sparked off by Van Gogh's encounter with the work of Impressionist and modernist painters in 1886.[7] Yet examination of his Paris paintings up to late 1886 repeatedly demonstrates the persistence of old-fashioned techniques alongside more progressive ones, suggesting a more gradual process of assimilation that was based on other examples.[8]

Similarly, there is reason to question the usual oversimplified account of his technique in this transitional period, which was established at an early date. Thus the painter Archibald Standish Hartrick recalled that when Van Gogh was making his first Paris paintings of still lifes, flowers and Montmartre landscapes, the 'plunge into pure colour' had 'stimulated him violently, and he piled the oil paint on in a way that was astonishingly and decidedly shocking to the innocent eye as

6 A streaky-brown, medium-rich layer with umber pigment also underlies the lower part of *Small bottle with peonies and blue delphiniums* (cat. 68). It may likewise have been applied in preparation for a landscape that was never completed, however, since a *plein-air* sketch of Montmartre on the reverse of the *carton* support reveals that it was carried out of doors.
7 Hulsker 1990, pp. 233, 234 and London etc. 2000-01, p. 223.
8 This more gradual process was proposed in Van Heugten 2003.



2 *Vase with Chinese asters and gladioli* (cat. 71). Detail of added dark glaze around the vase.



3 Vase *with Chinese asters and gladioli* (cat. 71). Detail of impasto in the flowers (compare with fig. 4).

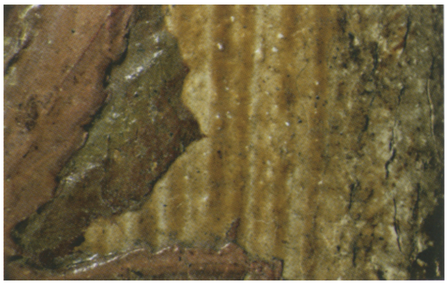


4 Adolphe Monticelli, *Vase with flowers*. Amsterdam, c. 1875 Van Gogh Museum. Detail illustrating how the wood of the panel support shows in between the painted flowers, lending a warm tone to the background.

well as that of the more sophisticated' (fig. 1).[9] Yet in fact the pictures examined often reveal a more calculated approach, showing a classical build-up in several well-defined stages of paint application that might even extend to the traditional finish of a surface glaze or scumble.

One example is the ambitious, signed work *Vase with Chinese asters and gladioli* (cat. 71), which seems to have been worked up to completion in three separate sessions. The last step entailed adding a dark glaze for shading around the still life (fig. 2) in a manner reminiscent of flower pieces by the recently deceased painter Adolphe Monticelli, whom Van Gogh greatly admired. A different approach was used to create the Monticelli-like background in *Glass with yellow roses* (cat. 69), replacing the deep tinted glaze with a pure red one, but now applied on top of a blackish underlayer to create a comparably warm and dark effect. Both pictures illustrate how Van Gogh was able to emulate the look of Monticelli's paintings while employing different means from that artist, who exploited the warm tone of his raw, often mahogany supports as a substrate instead (compare figs. 3 and 4).

Van Gogh's glazing technique ran counter to the practice of modern painters, who normally rejected its use because of its association with an old-fashioned 'gallery tone', as well as the tendency of medium-rich layers to darken with age.[10] In addition, the fact that a glaze had to be added on top of paint that was virtually dry made it unsuited to a rapid *alla prima* technique, as practised by the early Impressionists.[11] A surprising find for *Prawns and mussels* of late 1886 (cat. 72), which does provide a quick impression of his subject captured *au premier coup*, is that Van Gogh took special measures to achieve this. Surface examination and sampling reveal that he oiled out the surface of his ready-made canvas before use, overcoming the slight tooth of its fabric so that brushstrokes could skid out into the wet layer of medium to create a luscious *alla prima* effect (fig. 5).[12]



5 *Prawns and mussels* (cat. 72). Enlarged detail of the discoloured oiling-out layer brushed on top of the ground, visible at the right edge.

9 Hartrick 1939, pp. 43, 44. Hartrick's retrospective account was probably shaped by later opinion rather than based on first-hand viewing, however, since the two artists only met in late 1886.

10 See Callen 2000, p. 164, for the Impressionist generation's attitude towards glazing.

11 Samples from both cats. 69 and 70 revealed that the background glazes were applied on top of paint that was almost but not quite dry (hence pulling it up in places), a timing that exactly followed textbook instructions. See Carlyle 2001, p. 219.

12 For 19th-century sources on the practice of oiling out see Carlyle 2001, pp. 213, 214. The medium was usually applied as an intermediate layer between paint applications rather than directly on the ground, as is the case here. One of the purposes of oiling out, outlined by Jean François Leonore Mérimée in his *The art of painting in oil and fresco* published in 1839, was to facilitate 'the fresh colours to glide freely over the surface'. The streakily applied layer of medium in *Prawns and mussels* (cat. 72) is exposed in places at the picture surface, and is incorporated as a 10 μm thick, translucent layer on the ground in a paint sample cross-section from the pink seaweed. Its yellowish colour is thought to be largely due to discoloration rather than an intended effect, since no toning pigment is evident in the cross-section. Moreover, the sample shows that the layer was still wet when the pink brushstrokes were applied on top, pulling up the underlayer of medium and causing the pink paint to merge with it. The medium does not fluoresce in ultraviolet light, perhaps indicating an oil, but this has not been confirmed by analysis.

Also in the summer of 1886, Van Gogh painted landscapes out of doors in Montmartre. Some were intended as saleable pieces, and were done in a retrograde style reminiscent of Dutch 17th-century landscape or the Barbizon school of painters, who replicated Old Master techniques (cats. 64-66). One characteristic of these paintings is that they were begun with a traditional monochrome sketch, known as an *ébauche*, consisting of medium-rich layers with mixtures dominated by earth pigments and a little carbon black, perhaps with a little red or orange pigment added to provide a warmer tint.[13] Van Gogh then worked up the translucent grisaille with more opaque layers containing vivid pigments, such as cadmium yellow and cobalt blue, so that the bright and modern appearance of these landscapes that Hartrick noted was in fact a rather superficial one. One example begun *in situ*, the panoramic *View of Paris* (cat. 66), reveals the later addition of a semi-opaque glaze or 'scumble' in the studio, once the main paint layers were dry. The thin green layer (tinted with transparent red lake and viridian green pigments in paint sample cross-sections) was spread sparsely across the light buildings in the foreground area, serving 'to give air and distance to objects that seem too near', exactly in the manner that 19th-century manuals describe.[14]

Putting together the above observations strongly suggests that it was not the Impressionists, let alone the French avant-garde, who were Van Gogh's role models during the first year of his stay in Paris, but Old Master or older-generation painters instead, as he himself would make quite clear when writing later to his sister Willemien [626].[15]

1886/87, a turning point

From the turn of 1886 to 1887, however, the situation changed as Van Gogh began to strengthen his ties with avant-garde painters. From then on he embarked on a sequence of technical experiments, introducing new materials, but more importantly, seeking 'modern' ways of using them. Symptomatic of this development is the fact that he came to employ different types of picture support in a deliberate way in order to shape the look of the finished paintings. The particular texture, colour and tone of the substrate provide a basis for exploring the impact of brushstrokes, which alternately hid or accentuated these support features. In an unfolding sequence of trials, he queried how brushmarks of varied density and shape could act to create forceful colour contrasts, in conjunction with new types of bright pigment. It becomes possible to classify successive groups of pictures made using a shared set of materials that imposed common visual traits, or prompted a similar style of painting regardless of motif, as described further below. The fact that it is possible to cluster the 1887 paintings according to their shared formal characteristics rather than by subject-matter, reflects the fact that pictorial means had taken on an increasingly autonomous role.[16] This observation supports the view put forward in the essay 'From Realist to modernist' that Van Gogh had come to recognise artistic means as a legitimate vehicle of expression in its own right.

A l'essence painting combined with the Neo-Impressionist touch

The first step in this process took place in the first half of 1887, when Van Gogh switched to a thin, watercolour-like technique, eventually allowing the pale surfaces

13 The medium-rich *ébauche* layer in cat. 65 caused drying cracks to form in the paint layers on top. Traces of vermilion, orange ochre or red lake were sometimes identified in the *ébauche* layers too. The use of a warm-toned underpaint to create the violet-grey hues in the clouds, or showing through green vegetation, conformed closely to instructions in contemporary treatises for landscape painting. The most important was Pierre Louis Bouvier's *Manuels des jeunes artistes et amateur en peinture*, first published in 1827, which provided the basis for *plein-air* practice described in most subsequent treatises throughout the 19th century. See Callen 2000, p. 164. Surface examination and sampling of two informal *plein-air* studies on *carton* of the period, *Path in Montmartre* (cat. 55) and *View from Vincent's studio* (cat. 56), show that Van Gogh adopted a more modern approach for these works. This involved the use of a coloured *ébauche* as opposed to the academic grisaille, employing local hues that stood in contrast to the colours to be applied on top. The coloured *ébauche* had generally replaced the grisaille form in works of the Impressionist generation. See Callen 2000, pp. 163, 164.

14 The quotation is from John Samuel Templeton's 1846 edition of *The guide to oil painting*, as cited in Carlyle 2001, p. 220. The 8-15 micron thick, transparent green layer is included in two paint samples from the foreground area. The red lake pigment on an aluminium substrate fluoresces bright orange, indicating the Kopp's purpurin lake that Van Gogh is known to have used in this period, but this has not been confirmed by organic analysis.

15 'People have heard of the Impressionists, they have great expectations of them... and when they see them for the first time they're bitterly, bitterly disappointed and find them careless, ugly, badly painted, badly drawn, bad in colour, everything that's miserable.'

16 Hulsker 1996, chooses to group pictures primarily by their subject matter, for example.

6 Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec *Young woman at a table (Poudre de Riz)*, 1887. Detail of the *à l'essence* technique.



7 *Plaster cast of a woman's torso* (cat. 85). Detail of the *à l'essence* technique with hatched lines of cobalt violet.



of his canvases to feature in a prominent way. In the still lifes of February to March 1887, especially, and the landscapes of March to mid-April, the luminous grounds serve to lift the brightness of colours thinly applied on top. In three cases Van Gogh prepared his own canvases for reuse with a particularly cool white mixture which included cold zinc white in addition to lead white, and a little French ultramarine blue, which would enhance this effect (cats. 92, 93, 95 and Table 5).

Paint sampling also reveals that he began using new colours in this period, among them ready-made secondary hues: a manufacturer's orange consisting of cadmium yellow with red lake, cobalt violet, and the greenish blue pigment known as cerulean blue. The available data suggest that the latter two pigments were of minor importance to late 19th-century painters, who could easily replace them with more versatile mixtures made on the palette instead (such as red with blue for violet, or blue with yellow for greenish blue respectively).[17] Yet Van Gogh exploited the even tone given by these ready-mixed tube colours for a flat decorative effect, distributing them across the picture surface in washes and fine graphic touches.

His style in this period was very close to that of his friend and colleague, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, whom he had met at Cormon's studio. The younger painter offered a less dogmatic example of the Neo-Impressionist 'divisionist' touch, coupled with a thinner paint application. After 1887 this developed into the fully-fledged *peinture à l'essence* method in Toulouse-Lautrec's work, which was later described as involving the use of colours strongly thinned with turpentine and applied to the absorbent surfaces of *cartons* or sized but unprimed canvases, aiming for a matt, 'fresco-like' surface (fig. 6).[18] In the first half of 1887, whilst continuing to use the usual types of ready-made artists' canvas prepared with a lead white in oil-based ground, Van Gogh similarly began experimenting with more porous types of substrate that included bare wooden panel (cats. 81, 82), raw *carton* (cat. 85 and fig. 7) and very finely woven and thinly primed absorbent canvas (cat. 87). Often, however, he continued to vary the thickness and texture of paint strokes used to render various features, providing only a loose interpretation of the *peinture à l'essence* technique.

Neither did he commit himself wholesale to the Neo-Impressionist aesthetic that he seems to have aspired to in these *à l'essence* paintings, continuing to combine the divisionist touch with a more descriptive approach. He developed a repertoire of 'corrective' measures to reduce the thickness of the paint applied in order to recover visibility of the light-toned picture supports.[19] This included rubbing or brushing down thin veils of colour removed from the light tops of the primed weave, scraping through wet or semi-dry paint with a hard bristle brush or other tool (cats. 88, 90, 95 and fig. 8) or, very occasionally, even blotting paint with his fingertips (cats. 81,



8 *Dish with citrus fruit* (cat. 88). Detail of the right background, where finely hatched lines have been blended with a dry bristle brush at the top.

17 It seems that cobalt violet and cerulean blue were only rarely used by the Impressionists; see Callen 2000, pp. 148, 149. Both pigments were excluded from the ideal Impressionist palette drawn up by Van Gogh's colleague John Russell in late 1887, see Dredge 1996, pp. 269, 270. They were, however, included on Paul Signac's palette of c. 1885 (see Callen 2000, pp. 153, 154), and cerulean blue has recently been identified in an 1886 portrait by Edgar Degas (see London 2004-05, p. 109).
18 Gauzi 1957, pp. 11, 61. On the relationship between Van Gogh and Toulouse-Lautrec, see pp. 74-77.
19 It seems likely that the lean technique was at odds with Van Gogh's natural tendency to apply paint thickly. Early on he had also expressed the belief that solid paint was necessary to create lasting colour (letter 538).

82). These subtle textural effects were used to evoke a sense of space in background areas, or occasionally to break up foreground planes of colour that lacked interest (cat. 95) in a rejection of the more uncompromisingly flat and decorative surfaces of contemporary Pointillist painting. Furthermore, this practice of wet-into-wet working of colours directly on the canvas inevitably resulted in muddy effects that destroyed the purity of individual brushstrokes, which, according to Neo-Impressionist principles, should be blended by the eye instead.

Pointillism

Van Gogh's interest in Neo-Impressionist techniques took a new turn in May 1887, when he got to know Paul Signac and had seen the highly systematised canvases of Camille Pissarro, Georges Seurat and Signac at the recent *Les Indépendants* show (see p. 78). He began to paint in an overtly Pointillist style, building up tightly patterned surfaces with more weighted touches of dense colour that tended to cover the light priming. Consequently, instead of exploiting the ground for luminosity (as in *à l'essence* painting), colours had to be brightened by mixing with white instead, with pure white reserved for the lightest tones. The effects of blond tonality and scintillating light resulting from this new technique are well demonstrated by the ambitious *Garden with courting couples: Square Saint-Pierre* (cat. 104), which was worked up from a carefully preconceived design in more than three studio sessions.[20]

Characteristically, though, rather than taking the principles of Neo-Impressionism on board wholesale, the picture displays an ambivalent approach. On the one hand, though Van Gogh limited himself to narrow brushstrokes (less than 5 mm wide) to cover the considerable picture area (close to a *marine* 50 size), he rejected the uniform *point* in favour of varied touches that maintained a descriptive role. The long, slanting dashes in the sky that evoke a shimmering fall of light are particularly striking, and the repetitive imprints of a tapered brush that stood directly for the conical-shaped flowers of the horse chestnut trees. On the other hand, while the key pastel shades of blue, pink and yellow were in keeping with the Neo-Impressionist method of mixing pure spectral colours with white only to provide a harmonious range of tints, he added token accents of more saturated colour too. These included not only red hatchings in the green foliage, which, being opposite colours on the colour circle that were close in tone, did not detonate from a flatly decorative surface, but also more strident combinations of the complementary orange-blue and yellow-violet pairs in the clothing of the couple on the left.[21]

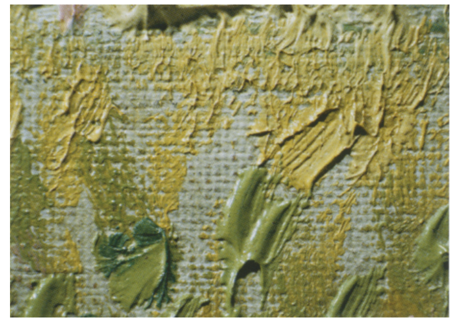
Van Gogh painted several Pointillist canvases in the month of May (see F 276 JH 1259 (fig. 101a) and F 361 JH 1260 (fig. 103a), for example), but the short-lived experiment suggests that he soon became disillusioned with the limiting medium of the painted dot, which he doubtless found 'tedious' as well. Perhaps he also became disenchanted with the method of brightening colours by adding white, which eventually leads to loss of chroma, weakening their impact.[22] Only weeks before it was a similar dissatisfaction with colour effects that had caused Emile Bernard to reject Pointillism following a visit to Signac's studio, later citing this event in his memoirs as follows: 'I looked carefully at some large, very luminous but not very lively landscapes [...]. I concluded that although the technique

20 Only some rather elusive evidence for a preliminary sketch of the composition was found, yet it appeared that even the narrow shapes of the tree trunks had been carefully planned in reserve. Surface examination and paint samples revealed that the two courting couples had been worked up on top of the landscape in three distinct stages of paint application.

21 The primarily decorative intent of this painting is proposed by Thomson 2002, who, on p. 54, also points out that the vibrant colour scheme in the clothing of the left-hand figures presages that of later 1887 works, such as *Red cabbages and onions* (cat. 135).

22 See Berns 2004, p. 225, for a diagram of lightness versus chroma. He defines luminosity as the attribute by which a perceived colour is judged to have the property of a light source. For colours to appear luminous they must be simultaneously light and high in chroma. Yellow naturally possesses both properties, but mixing blue with white to lighten its naturally darker colour will eventually lead to a loss of chroma, for example.

9 *Bank of the Seine* (cat. 106). Detail of the far riverbank where the thinly primed canvas with a pure lead white ground is visible in between loose brushwork.



[Pointillism] might have been good for the reproduction of vibrant light, it ruined the colour, and I immediately adopted an alternative system'.[23] Though Van Gogh would return to the vibrant effect given by a busily patterned surface in his still lifes of September to October (cats. 126, 127), this now involved the uncompromising juxtaposition of broader marks of saturated colour instead, echoing the new principles of painting propagated by Bernard.



10 *Bank of the Seine* (cat. 106). Detail of paint texturing using the fingertips to suggest the fluffy clouds.

Spontaneity versus method

In a more informal approach, Van Gogh embarked upon a series of *plein-air* landscapes painted around Asnières in the period May to August 1887. The very direct impression given by these studies painted swiftly on the spot is heightened by the particular choice of materials and techniques employed. On the one hand he began to use very thinly primed absorbent canvases (cats. 106, 108) with a grainy surface that paralleled the texture of the *carton* supports with rolled primings that he began using in the same period.[24] Absorbent canvases, as used by Paul Signac and others of the Neo-Impressionist group, formed a convenient choice for working out of doors, since they wicked out oil to speed drying of the colours applied. Furthermore they helped to create matt surface effects that heightened the illusion of shimmering light in Pointillist pictures.[25]

In *The bridge at Courbevoie* (cat. 108) and *Bank of the Seine* (cat. 106), Van Gogh explored the visual properties of the thinly primed fabrics, drawing loaded brushstrokes swiftly across the grainy surface to create speckled highlights in the water, for example. The light ground, left showing overall in between open touches of colour creates the sensation of flickering daylight (fig. 9). In cat. 106, in particular, a calculated yet immediate approach is apparent in the repertoire of descriptive strokes that stood directly for the different elements of the scene portrayed, dabbing paint with his fingers to achieve the woolly texture of the clouds (fig. 10), and exploiting fine trails of stringy lead white impasto to render bankside reflections, for example.[26]

For both paintings Van Gogh employed a select range of vivid colours, perhaps reflecting the practical constraints of a smaller palette used out of doors. At the same time, though, the repeated distribution of a limited set of paints across the picture area, evidently using the straight tube colours to provide a constant shade, enhanced the flat decorative effect.[27] These works manage to combine empirical observation and directness of handling reminiscent of the Impressionist *plein-air* technique, with the use of a pre-selected range of colours applied in a deliberate arrangement of brushstrokes, recalling the more systematic and decorative approach of the following Neo-Impressionist generation.

Mid-toned grounds

Concurrent with his exploitation of thinly primed pale supports, Van Gogh began applying mid-toned ground layers in a pinkish grey or pinkish brown colour to cover up failed works. The portraits (cats. 84 and 116-20) and landscapes (cats. 103, 111-14) painted on these recycled supports are characterised by rapid and judicious touches of colour that left the ground showing in between, with no sign of smudged corrections to spoil the fresh effect, despite the very minimal to complete lack of

23 Bernard 1952 I, p. 318 ('J'y regardai de grands paysages très lumineux, mais peu vivants [...]. J'en conclus que si ce procédé était bon pour la production vibrante de la lumière, il dépouillait la couleur, et je me jetai aussitôt dans la théorie contraire.').
24 See p. 99, note 34, for Van Gogh's use of canvas without any ground at all for his Asnières landscapes.
25 An unvarnished and unlined example on raw canvas that shows this intended 'fresco-like' surface effect is Georges Seurat's *Bridge at Courbevoie* of 1886-87, Cleveland etc. 1987-88, cat. 34. Painters were also known to have enhanced the dryness of their paint application by blotting out excess medium from colours squeezed from the tube.
26 Analysis confirmed that the white impasto consists of lead white (no zinc white). On the tendency for lead white to be stringy see p. 142, note 185.
27 Several paint samples from *Bank of the Seine* (cat. 106) confirm the use of colours straight from the tube: a dark green in the trees that consists of emerald green with rounded particles of gypsum and a little barium sulphate, a light yellow in the bank that consists of chrome yellow with needle-shaped particles of gypsum, and a presumably ready-manufactured light green that contains emerald green (with no rounded particles of gypsum) mixed with chrome yellow (again associated with needle-shaped particles of gypsum) and lead white. Fewer paint samples are available for *The bridge at Courbevoie* (cat. 108), but one sample of the red paint used to trace the contours of the perspective frame onto the canvas again appears to be a tube mixture containing vermilion, red lead, clay and silicates.



11 *Trees and undergrowth* (cat. 112). Enlarged detail of the exposed pinkish brown ground covering up an abandoned picture. A loss in the white impasto was retouched at a later date.

underdrawing to serve as a guide. The self-portrait studies, in particular, demonstrate his ability to create convincing form using differentiated planes of brushwork, only occasionally resorting to the *pinceau* (pencil) to delineate features, exercising his belief that 'true drawing is modelling with colour' [569].

The darker pinkish brown priming, in particular, encouraged a system of high-key colour application to compensate for the lack of luminance offered by a pale ground. Instead, both colour and tone were heightened by means of simultaneous contrast, so that bright green dabs of foliage, for example, were set off against spots of pinkish brown ground to enhance the complementary red-green pairs in the woodland views (fig. 11), whereas powerful oppositions of naturally 'dark' blue and 'light' yellow colours create forceful modelling in the self-portraits. The use of a pinkish brown ground in the *plein-air* landscapes can be seen to perpetuate the traditional look of the warm *imprimatura* or *ébauche*, encouraging a particularly shorthand technique. On the one hand the ground colour provided a ready middle tint that could be used to model forms in an economical way. On the other hand it fostered a rapid colour mixing, since the colours viewed on a wooden palette would be closer to their envisaged effect on the actual picture, enabling them to be gauged in a direct fashion.[28] Both surface examination and paint samples from the different versions of trees (cats. 111-13) provide evidence of an impetuous, slurried mixing of colours within individual paint blobs lifted from the palette. This remarkably swift technique seems in keeping with the aim of these pictures, which was to capture the transient effects of dappled sunlight filtering through tightly knitted foliage. Yet at the same time, the differentiated dabs of colour provide edge-to-edge patterning in a tapestry-like effect which, together with the shallow space portrayed, emphasises surface above pictorial illusion.

High-key colour versus tone

From September to November 1887, Van Gogh painted a number of still lifes that harked back to the vibrant patterning and luminosity of his most Pointillist pictures (see cat. 104). On the one hand he executed *Quinces, lemons, pears and grapes* (cat. 128), based on the naturally light colour of chrome yellow. Ready-made lemon, yellow and orange shades of the chrome yellow pigment were employed to create a narrow range of tones in the still life (a technique referred to as *'ton sur ton'*), at some stage overpainting the bright red rebate of the frame yellow too, to create a more harmonious ensemble.[29] Contrasting touches of colour were limited to a few subtle accents of red, orange (now altered to a drab ochre), green and light blue, which were necessary to define contours and render hatched shadows.[30] As opposed to this delicate tonal approach, however, other still lifes of the period show a strident juxtaposition of opposite colours – yellow and violet in *Grapes* (cat. 127) or red and green in *Apples* (cat. 126) – which were applied in solid bars or fields of paint that produced more effective simultaneous contrast than had been possible with a fine divisionist touch.[31] In these paintings, relationships of colour and tone might be more effectively established on a coloured layer, in preference to the light primed canvas. In *Grapes* (cat. 127) for example, a thin and translucent greyish to dark blue layer randomly brushed over the light priming provided a ready body colour for the grapes and strengthened the purple to crimson hues applied on top,

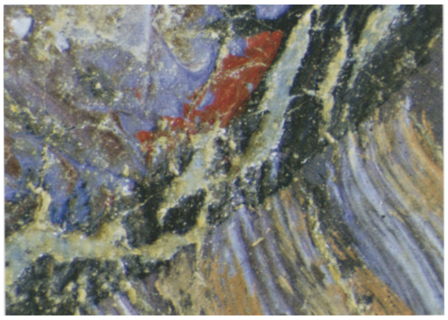
28 See Callen 2000, pp. 65, 66, for the problem of translating colour viewed on the palette to its effect on different primed surfaces.
29 See p. 132, fig. 56.
30 For the altered orange stripes see pp. 134, 135, figs. 58, 59.
31 In practice, tiny patches and dots of colour are apt to create an overall blurring and greyness rather than convincing effects of simultaneous contrast.

acting in the same way as a coloured *ébauche* (fig. 12).[32] In *Quinces, lemons, pears and grapes* (cat. 128), dark green to brown underlayers (which were simultaneously used to cover up an abandoned design; see Table 5) offered better visual contrast for the light yellow shades applied on top than a whitish ground would have done (fig. 13).[33]

In October to November 1887, Van Gogh turned to making copies after Japanese prints as exercises in the premeditated use of a select range of bright complementary colours, to create forceful contrasts that heightened the colour schemes of the original examples (cats. 131-33). Both the flat decorative style and the systematic approach of these paintings reflect the artist's acquaintance with Emile Bernard's latest thoughts on painting.[34] In each case the same restricted range of bright pigments was used, including emerald green, vermilion, chrome yellow, cobalt blue, as well as red lead and a particular variety of cochineal lake on a tin substrate, both of which seem to have only entered onto his palette that year. Due to its starch ingredient, the cochineal paint is thought to have offered a relatively flat and translucent colour that was utilised with dark undermodelling for the decorative silhouette of the tree trunk in *Flowering plum orchard: after Hiroshige* (cat. 131), for example.[35] In places Van Gogh exploited the full body of these tube colours, which he used unmixed and cleanly applied (since paint samples provided no evidence for cross-pollution of pigments), aiming for maximum chromatic contrast.

Although the shared palette lends a superficial resemblance to all three copies after the prints, one of them actually demonstrates a very different approach reminiscent of *In the café: Agostina Segatori in Le Tambourin* (cat. 84), which was painted several months before. Exceptionally, *Bridge in the rain: after Hiroshige* (cat. 132) was begun with a grisaille sketch of the composition made on the grey priming, which was left visible in a few places between the fields of colour laid on top.[36] This extra step in the working process may have helped to resolve the strong sense of aerial perspective evoked by the particular subject-matter portrayed (a diagonally receding bridge over water) into an organised, planar design. Essentially the switch from a scheme based on relationships of tone to one based on relationships of colour in the final paint layer recalls the traditional manner of overlaying colour on a monochrome *ébauche*, an academic technique that perhaps surprisingly resurfaced at this late Paris date.[37]

Each of the *Japonaiserie* copies employed a different type of very thinly primed fabric, consisting of white or grey chalk grounds on fine linen for cats. 131 and 132, and even finer cotton prepared with a barytes ground for cat. 133 (as for cats. 124, 130 and F 452 JH 1330).[38] One reason for Van Gogh's choice of these particular supports was surely to save on cost, since the materials used were relatively cheap and also sparingly applied, so they formed an economical alternative to the usual types of ready-prepared artists' canvas that consisted of sized linen fabric with a lead white in oil-based ground. Van Gogh also mixed considerable quantities of



12 *Grapes* (cat. 127). Enlarged detail revealing a transparent blue underlayer visible through drying cracks in the paint on top.



13 *Quinces, lemons, pears and grapes* (cat. 128). Detail of an even green layer that extends onto the bottom tacking edge and was used to cover up an abandoned painting.

32 Samples confirmed that the blue underlayer contains variable mixtures of lead white with cobalt and ultramarine blue. Surface examination showed that some grapes were first outlined on the blue layer using red lake paint, and were subsequently worked up with purple and crimson colours on top. The light blue highlights that were finally applied reiterate the appearance of the translucent blue underpaint on the pale ground.

33 The green layer is completely hidden by opaque chrome yellow paint in the finished picture. Where extra luminosity was required in the background, Van Gogh covered the green with local touches of white before adding yellow paint on top.

34 For which see pp. 80-85.

35 It is thought that the considerable addition of starch filler reduced the transparency of the tin-cochineal lake, though one also needs to take into account that surface degradation has led to fogging and increased opacity of the colour over time. See p. 141, note 182, on the impact of adding starch during the manufacture of red lake paints.

36 Surface examination with the stereomicroscope reveals tiny areas where the preliminary sketch is exposed in the form of very thin washes and lines of dark fluid medium.

37 Recent research revealed that Edgar Degas, who had received a thoroughly classical training as a young painter, always kept to this procedure of setting down a monochrome framework before applying colour when working in various media. See London 2004-05, p. 33.

38 See pp. 109-112 for a fuller account of these different types of picture support.



14 *Flowering plum orchard: after Hiroshige* (cat. 131). Raking light detail of impasto blossoms.

barytes with his colours on the palette for his small study of *Sunflowers gone to seed* (cat. 124).[39] Besides the rheological impact of mixing barytes with his paints, the added extender would also have had the economic advantage that it bulked out his colours, reducing the quantity of tube paints required. Van Gogh's use of pure (i.e. unmixed) lead white (cat. 106), barytes and chalk grounds in Paris anticipates his use of the same materials to prepare, as he put it, 'less expensive' canvases in Arles, where he would apply them to a coarse jute instead of these finely woven fabrics.[40]

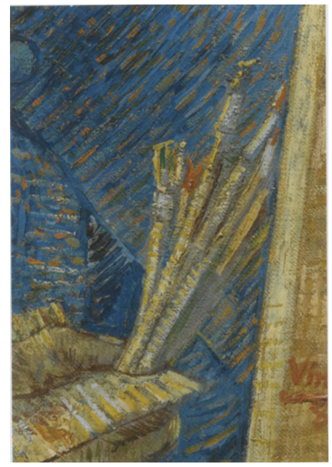
Unlike the Arles jute, the experimental picture supports that Van Gogh employed in late 1887 offered much finer-textured and neutral-toned surfaces that were not usually exploited in an obvious way.[41] The absorbent properties of these thinly primed canvases were evidently not employed to soak up *à l'essence* colours in a technique aimed to eradicate textural brushwork, as in paintings by Toulouse-Lautrec, Gauguin and Degas.[42] Instead, having explored the *à l'essence* technique to its limit in the first part of the year, Van Gogh now retained full-bodied passages of colour, translating other graphic elements of his flat print designs into painterly effects too, such as the impasto blossoms in cat. 131 (fig. 14), and the lines scored into semi-dry paint to suggest driving rain in cat. 132. As with other painters of the day, he may have considered the advantage of these different types of absorbent support to lie in the fact that, by reducing the oil content of the paint, they would render the colours more brilliantly and less subject to change.[43] In August 1888, he expressed thoughts in a similar vein with respect to coarsely ground pigments which, since they would be less saturated by oil than finely ground ones, would provide fresher colours that might darken less.[44]

Texture and the use of twill canvas

At the same time as these works on thinly primed supports with fine-toothed surfaces, Van Gogh turned to another approach, using matching twill canvases with a distinctive texture and pinkish grey oil ground for three paintings made between November 1887 and February 1888 (cats. 135-37). In the summer he had employed somewhat darker, liver-coloured grounds in a very direct way, but now only tiny patches of priming were left visible in *Red cabbages and onions* (cat. 135) for a unifying tone. Stereomicroscopic examination of *Portrait of Etienne-Lucien Martin* (cat. 136) reveals that at an early stage of painting the ground had provided the keynote for a forceful colour scheme with bright red, green and chocolate brown hues. This was reworked towards a more delicate tonal result in the finished picture however, bearing in mind that the fading of the purple passages has accentuated this effect.[45] Such a change in concept ran counter to the traditional progression from a tonal to a high-key colour rendering in the course of painting (compare cats. 84 and 132, for example). In *Red cabbages and onions*, colour was applied using solid, even 'slab-like' brushstrokes, which strengthened effects of simultaneous contrast while taking stylisation to new extremes, providing oddly faceted forms in the cabbages, for example. Originally the partitioned scheme of violet with yellow in the background would have lent a more balanced decorative effect too, which has now been undermined by fading of the cochineal lake ingredient.

Van Gogh's *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 137) can be taken as a demonstration of his views on the use of colour at the time, illustrating the use of a limited range

39 See pp. 142, 110, 111, figs. 25, 26. Barytes is commonly found as an ingredient of Van Gogh's tube paints, but is not present in the large quantities and exceptionally coarse grade observed here.
40 Letter 712: 'We'll let Tasset down completely, probably, because to a large extent at least, we'll use less expensive colours, both Gauguin and I. As for canvas, we'll also prepare it ourselves'. Recent technical examination has demonstrated that when Van Gogh shared his studio with Gauguin from October to December 1888 the two artists split a roll of jute fabric prepared in sequence with pure chalk, barytes and lead white grounds. Available evidence suggests that, for the trials with barium sulphate, Van Gogh relied heavily on his Paris experience, continuing to use a mixed animal glue and oil-binding medium rather than the mixture of starch and glue favoured by Gauguin. On Arles see Lister *et al.* 2001, esp. pp. 358, 360. The animal glue and oil-binding medium of the ground in cat. 124 was identified by a combination of FTIR, GC-MS and HPLC.
41 Exceptionally, a beige barytes ground is left showing in the sketchily painted background of the small *Sunflowers gone to seed* (cat. 124) and in the right part of the larger version (F 452 JH 1330). Otterlo 2003, p. 182, suggests that the latter painting was perhaps left unfinished in this area, but it is also possible that the visibility of the support is a result of fading of the colour applied on top. In cat. 132 the grey chalk ground shows indirectly through thin layers of grisaille underpaint left visible in and around the figures, for example. Generally, though, the supports are concealed by paint layers on top.
42 On Gauguin's use of chalk grounds see p. 111, note 89.
43 See Carlyle 2001, p. 168.
44 See letter 668. Unfortunately, Van Gogh's correspondence provides little information on his artistic motives for using absorbent grounds. His references to absorbent canvas in Arles in April-June 1888 merely concern his wish to find a low-cost source [593], his preference for a rough type of absorbent canvas [610], and his bad experience of working with it in the open air [625]. Likewise, for his experiments in preparing coarse jute with different types of ground in October-December 1888, he only states low cost as the motive [712], see note 40.
45 On the discoloration of violet passages in this painting, and in *Red cabbages and onions* (cat. 135) mentioned below see pp. 136-38. See also Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, and Burnstock *et al.* 2005 I.



15 *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 137). Detail of the artist's brushes.

based on the six primary and secondary colours plus white, as 'modern' practice entailed, with a corresponding number of seven tin-ferruled brushes (fig. 15). In a later letter to his sister Willemien, he described the colours on his palette as 'the only whole colours, though', and listed them as 'lemon yellow, vermilion, Veronese green, cobalt blue' [626].[46] Analysis of the patches of paint depicted on his palette reveals that these are indeed the same colours he describes having used, though some others were identified too.[47] Furthermore, the layout of his palette shows the principles of optical colour mixing, placing stripes of contrasting colour next to and over each other, in combinations that echo those employed for the various passages of the self-portrait (such as the cluster of blue, orange and white used for his smock).

As with painters like Claude Monet and Camille Pissarro, Van Gogh's choice of twill (*coutil*) with a distinctive weave enabled him to explore the impact of canvas texture, acting with varied brushwork and paint quality.[48] When painting *plein-air* landscapes in Asnières, he had utilised the finely corrugated surfaces of plain weave canvas in conjunction with different brushstrokes to describe the fleeting scenes before him, and to provide a unified surface structure (see cats. 106, 108 discussed above). Now the insistent diagonal bias of twill loaned itself to more explicit decorative effects. The interplay between canvas grain and paint layers is at its most direct in *Red cabbages and onions* (cat. 135). The twill exerts itself in intermediate passages of thin dryish brushwork but is hidden by more solid slabs of paint. The diagonal slant of the weave and striated brushwork act to complement each other in a decorative scheme.

In the following pictures, *Portrait of Etienne-Lucien Martin* (cat. 136) and *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 137), the *coutil* seems to have had a more decisive impact upon Van Gogh's way of applying paint. He exploited the resistant tooth of the fabric in conjunction with dry paint to build up highly tactile, even amorphously caked surfaces which, however, culminated in some fine dots and stripes of colour that retain a divisionist approach. This careful working and reworking to create a dense web of texture and colour recalls the decorative surfaces of Post-Impressionist paintings by artists like Camille Pissarro and Claude Monet, whose work Van Gogh later claimed to admire.[49] At the same time, though, it provided a look reminiscent of Japanese *crépons* (wood block prints with a surface resembling crêpe paper) that were reported to have inspired him in this period.[50]

The last of the series on twill, *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 137), demonstrates Van Gogh's command of a broad range of tactile devices which he was still using in a descriptive way to render illusionary space. An example is the suppressed texture of the background wall achieved by levelling out a dense network of 'basket-weave' strokes (fig. 16) that contrast with the thickly encrusted hatchings that describe the rounded forms of the portrait. The twill was left explicit only in the canvas depicted on the easel, where its crisp pattern evokes the rough wood of the stretching frame. At the same time it helps to draw this element forward into the foreground plane, an effect that was strengthened by Van Gogh sharply incising the left frame contour along a ruler into wet paint (fig. 17). He illustrates an array of tools used for sculpting the picture surface: including flat hogs' bristle brushes that were suited to drag stiff touches of colour over the nubs of the canvas weave, and springy *pinceaux* used for the finer divisionist touches (fig. 15).

46 The meaning of the phrase 'the only whole colours', is discussed in the catalogue entry on this work.
47 If one assumes that 'lemon yellow' corresponds to zinc yellow and 'Veronese green' to emerald green, then together with cobalt blue and vermilion, all four colours mentioned by Van Gogh have been identified by analysis of samples from the patches of paint portrayed on his palette. The vermilion was found together with red lead in a dark orange heap of paint, probably a ready-mixed colour from the tube. Additional colours identified on the palette, but not mentioned by Van Gogh, include a deep red that contains cochineal lake on a tin substrate with added vermilion, a light orange shade of cadmium yellow, possibly chrome yellow, lead white and zinc white. Chrome orange was also found mixed into the light background paint, perhaps corresponding to the light orange colour that has not been analysed on his palette.
48 For examples of twill canvas used by Claude Monet and Camille Pissarro, as well as occasionally by Edouard Manet and Paul Cézanne, see Callen 2000, pp. 37-44. For Manet, see also Cleveland etc. 1987-88, cat. 1. Van Gogh's interest in the textural effect of his picture supports may also be linked to his drawing practice, for he explored the distinctive structure of Ingres paper in a deliberate way, for example.
49 Monet's *The rocks of Belle-Isle* of 1886 is just one example; see London 1979-80, cat. 137, p. 98.
50 Hartrick 1939, p. 46, recalls that when Van Gogh led him around his Paris studio he had drawn his attention to some *crêpes*, which convinced Hartrick of Van Gogh's aim to 'get a similar effect in his painting of little cast shadows in oil paint from the roughness of surface'.



16 *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 137). Detail of the background where the paint has been densely applied throughout, smoothing out brushstrokes to subdue texture.



17 *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 137). Detail of the stretching frame revealing the texture of the twill canvas, which contrasts with the dense paint coverage in the background. The left contour of the frame was incised along a straight edge into wet paint, sharpening its contour.

Van Gogh's experiments with prominent canvas texture did not end with these late Paris works on twill. In Arles, he continued to explore distinctive fabrics, ranging from a fine twill (F 386 JH 1365), to a length of coarse jute canvas shared with Gauguin in October to December of 1888.[51] In the end, though, he seems to have rejected a pronounced fabric grain for its tendency to dominate the painting process to an unacceptable degree, eliminating the crisply gestured brushwork that formed such an essential component of his technique.

Conclusion

This study of Van Gogh's Antwerp and Paris paintings demonstrates a period of tremendous creative enquiry, in both an artistic and technical sense. In the second year of his stay in the French capital, in particular, when strengthening his ties with the avant-garde he embarked upon a rapidly unfolding sequence of technical experiments in his quest to forge a personal and modern style. Often it was exposure to the work or ideas of a particular painter that seems to have lent credence to a new line of exploration sparked at a certain moment in time. Ongoing technical investigation of painters who are thought to have provided key inspiration (Monticelli, Toulouse-Lautrec, Signac and Bernard) should clarify these paths of influence, although one should not expect to find that he copied their example in a literal way.[52]

What is striking is that Van Gogh often jumped from one technical experiment to its opposite in order to test painterly extremes. Very thin to loaded paint application, whitish primings to those with a pronounced mid-tone hue, tonal to high-key colour schemes, and relatively smooth supports to textured twill ones – these were just some of the contrasting alternatives that he reviewed, often in rapid tempo or even in tandem. On the one hand this suggests the somewhat trial-and-error approach one might expect of an autodidact, seeking to gain an intuitive understanding of his painting materials through first-hand practice. On the other hand, without wishing to suggest that he worked in a programmatic way, there is a certain logic to discover in this organic process of assimilation and rejection, drawing the artist forward from one topic of investigation to the next. In the long term it seems that Van Gogh knew where his strengths lay, ultimately retaining, for example, both impulsive colour mixing and pronounced brushwork as essential components of his own idiom. It was this personal conviction that lay at the root of his artistic achievement, as he realised early on: 'As regards technique – I'm still searching for many things and with me it's the case that, although I find some of them, there remain infinitely many that I lack. But – all the same, I know *why I work as I work* – and base my search on solid ground' [528].

51 Lister *et al.* 2001.
52 In 2005 the Van Gogh Museum initiated a research project entitled 'Van Gogh's studio practice', the aim of which is to situate the artist's practice and ideas within the context of his time. The research focuses on painters whom Van Gogh actually met, as well as those whose *oeuvre* and working methods he admired or knew well. The project is sponsored by The Royal Dutch Shell Company, Partner in Science to the Van Gogh Museum (see Foreword), and will culminate in an exhibition with publications in spring 2013.

Catalogue

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with the assistance of
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Note to the reader

Each catalogue entry consists of a documentation section and a discussion of the painting. The documentation lists the date of the work, its technique and dimensions, any inscriptions, the inventory number, the letter or letters in Van Gogh's correspondence in which the work is mentioned directly or indirectly, together with information about the provenance, literature and exhibitions. The list of exhibitions is as exhaustive as possible, but the literature is not, being restricted to those publications that make a substantive contribution to the knowledge of the work discussed. The research and the manuscript were largely complete in 2006, and although we have attempted to incorporate new findings and publications the new suggestions concerning dates of some of the Paris works in Feilchenfeldt 2009 are not mentioned in the texts but are given separately in Appendix 2.

The F and SD numbers refer to the relevant catalogue number in J.-B. de la Faille, *The works of Vincent van Gogh. His paintings and drawings*, Amsterdam 1970; the JH numbers to Jan Hulsker, *The new complete Van Gogh. Paintings, drawings, sketches*, Amsterdam & Philadelphia 1996. Passages quoted from Van Gogh's correspondence are followed by a reference in square brackets to the relevant letter number in Leo Jansen, Hans Luijten and Nienke Bakker (eds.), *Vincent Van Gogh. The letters*, Amsterdam & The Hague 2009: www.vangoghletters.org. Literature and exhibitions are given in short title form, with the full details at the back of the book. All the documents referred to, whether or not accompanied by an inventory number, are in the archives of the Van Gogh Museum unless otherwise stated. Despite the pioneering work of Walter Feilchenfeldt (Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 284-93), Andries Bonger's 1890 inventory of Theo van Gogh's collection needs further study. The museum plans to publish it in a closely argued scholarly edition, so we have not gone into detail about the identifications made in this book.

Many of the works have a similar provenance, the details of which are listed below. In all other cases they are given in the relevant entry.

Cats. 45, 46, 49, 50, 52, 53, 54, 57, 60, 61, 62, 63, 67, 75, 76, 83, 86, 87, 88, 97, 100, 108, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 130, 132: from date of execution to 1891, T. van Gogh; 1891-1925, J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62, V.W. van Gogh; 1962, Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1962-73, on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973, on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Cats. 47, 48, 58, 125: from date of execution to 1891, T. van Gogh; 1891-1925, J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-52, V.W. van Gogh; 1952-60, Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1960-62, Theo van Gogh Foundation; 1962, Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1962-73, on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973, on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Cats. 51, 56, 66, 78, 84, 90, 93, 98, 103, 107, 116: from date of execution to 1891,

T. van Gogh; 1891-1925, J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62, V.W. van Gogh; 1962, Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1931-73, on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973, on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Cats. 55, 59, 74, 85, 99, 101, 109, 124: from date of execution to 1891, T. van Gogh; 1891-1925, J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62, V.W. van Gogh; 1962, Vincent van Gogh Foundation (ratified in 1982); 1962-73, on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973, on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Cats. 114, 131, 136: from date of execution to 1891, T. van Gogh; 1891-1925, J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-52, V.W. van Gogh; 1952-60, Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1960-62, Theo van Gogh Foundation; 1962, Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1931-73, on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973, on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Cats. 65, 73: from date of execution to 1891, T. van Gogh; 1891-1925, J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62, V.W. van Gogh; 1926, on loan to the Museum Mesdag, The Hague; 1962, Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1931-73, on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973, on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Cats. 70, 94: from date of execution to 1891, T. van Gogh; 1891-1925, J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1917-19, on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; 1925-62, V.W. van Gogh; 1926, on loan to the Museum Mesdag, The Hague; 1962, Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1962-73, on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973, on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Cats. 72, 89, 92, 129: from date of execution to 1891, T. van Gogh; 1891-1925, J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62, V.W. van Gogh; 1962, Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1927-30, on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; 1931-73, on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973, on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Cats. 80, 105, 110: from date of execution to 1891, T. van Gogh; 1891-1925, J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1917-19, on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; 1925-62, V.W. van Gogh; 1962, Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1962-73, on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973, on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Cats. 82, 111, 113, 135: from date of execution to 1891, T. van Gogh; 1891-1925, J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62, V.W. van Gogh; 1962, Vincent van Gogh Foundation (ratified in 1982); 1931-73, on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973, on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Cats. 96, 134: from date of execution to 1891, T. van Gogh; 1891-1925, J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62, V.W. van Gogh; 1927-30, on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; 1962, Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1931-73, on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973, on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Theo van Gogh is listed as the first owner of Vincent's work, but strictly speaking that is open to question. The assumption that he and not his brother owned all the paintings and drawings is based on Vincent's letter of about 25 July 1883 in which he stated for legal reasons: 'My studies and everything in the way of work in the stu-

dio is definitely your property' [367]. Furthermore, Vincent Willem van Gogh, the son of Theo van Gogh and Johanna van Gogh-Bonger, formally inherited the Van Gogh Collection on his father's death in 1891, but since his mother had custody of it until her death in 1925, her name precedes his in the provenance listings.

Although the list of exhibitions for each work of art is as exhaustive as possible, we have excluded the presentations of parts of the collection in Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum during the time it was housed there, from roughly 1931 to 1973. In making additions and corrections to the exhibition history of the works given in De la Faille's oeuvre catalogue of 1970 we have consulted catalogues, archive cards, newspaper cuttings, notes made by Johanna van Gogh-Bonger and Vincent Willem van Gogh, and other archival information. It was impossible to document this for each work, but in the list at the back of the book the reader will find the full details of a particular exhibition together with references to the inventory numbers of documents in the Van Gogh Museum or other sources which provide information on the exhibition or which were essential in identifying the work exhibited. The following abbreviations have been used for the other sources: ASM (Archives of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam), BSM (loan form of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam), IVGM (inventory card of the Van Gogh Museum), and VA (Vollard Archives, Paris, Musée d'Orsay).

If known, the prices asked for works shown at commercial exhibitions (or the notice 'not for sale') are given. They are listed in the documentation of the work in question after the catalogue numbers of the relevant exhibition. The amounts (or 'not for sale' notices) appear in square brackets when they are known from documents; the use of parentheses means that this information comes from the exhibition catalogue. If catalogues and documents with lists of the works on display do not mention a price, this has been interpreted as 'not for sale'.

The following abbreviations have been used throughout the book for the scientific methods used to analyse paint samples. FTIR: Fourier Transform Infrared Spectrometry; OM: Optical Microscopy; PLM: Polarised Light Microscopy; SEM-EDS: Scanning Electron Microscopy with Energy Dispersive X-ray Spectroscopy; THMGC-MS: Thermal Hydrolysis and Methylation Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry, in combination with Curie Point Pyrolysis and High Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC).

And last, but certainly not least, it should be noted that almost all the works by Van Gogh in the Van Gogh Museum belong to the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, as do the documents in the museum's keeping. The Foundation's collection is on permanent loan to the museum, and we are grateful to its board for the trust reposed in us.

45
Portrait of an old man

Antwerp, 7 or 8 December 1885
Oil on canvas
44.2 x 33.8 cm
Unsigned
Inv. no. s 61 V/1962
F 205 JH 971

Letters 547, 552, 565

Towards the end of his time in Nuenen, soon after his two-day visit to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, Van Gogh decided 'to bear portrait painting in mind' [541]. This was a new departure prompted by his need to earn money. Up until now he had not painted any portraits, merely studies of the heads of Nuenen country-folk, the purpose of which was to train himself in depicting types rather than individuals. He was now able to give striking renderings of skins tanned by the sun and calloused by hard labour, but that was as far as his experience went.

He needed to practise with faces other than those of peasants in order to pursue his new ambition, and he pinned his hopes on Antwerp, where he wanted to stay briefly. He started 'hunting for models' as soon as he got there [546]. It took him more than a fortnight to get in touch with any, but he then made at least nine oil studies in roughly two months, only five of which have survived (cats. 45-48 and fig. 46a).[1] However, he had to call a halt to portraiture on 18 January 1886 when he began painting at the academy in the daytime and drawing there in the evenings,[2] as he acknowledged at the beginning of February: 'As to the portraits, there certainly won't be much time for them if I want to keep up with everything regularly' [557].[3]

Portrait of an old man (cat. 45) was one of his very first efforts in the genre.[4] The face is shown in profile against a dark brown background. The man has greying hair, a fairly bald forehead, black eyebrows and brown eyes, a rather bent nose and a full pepper-and-salt beard painted in warm browns and greys and, by way of contrast, cool blues. He is wearing a white shirt with a black bow tie, and a brown jacket with a dark collar.

The painting was made a fortnight after Van Gogh arrived in Antwerp. He wrote on or about Sunday 6 December that he had an appointment the following day with 'a splendid old man – will he come???' [546]. We know that he did from the next letter, of Wednesday 9 December: 'I've made two fairly large heads by way of a trial for a portrait. Firstly that old man I already wrote to you about – a type of head in the style of V. Hugo's – then I also have a study of a woman' [547].

The latter is lost (on which see cats. 47, 48), but this is the study of the old man, and the bearded, Rembrandtesque model does indeed look a little like Victor Hugo (1802-85), who had died six months previously (fig. 45a).[5] The model, 'an old Frenchman' as we are told in a later letter [565], admittedly had less hair than his illustrious fellow countryman, but his beard does look very much like the writer's.[6]

1 Van Gogh described eight portrait studies in his letters, two of which can be identified for certain (this *Portrait of an old man* and F 207 JH 979 [fig. 46a]), and two others with some reservations (cats. 47, 48). The other four, which are unknown, were a study of a woman [547], a study of an expensive female model [549], a study of the same female model as in F 207 JH 979 (fig. 46a) [550 and 551], and a child's head [554]. See also p. 39, note 12. It is not inconceivable that Van Gogh overpainted some portraits in Paris, but although examinations of Paris pictures on reused canvas have revealed several underlying heads, none of them were painted in Antwerp (see cats. 75, 95, 99-101, 129 and F 225 JH 1110, and for an overview Table 5). The bust-length portrait of a woman beneath *In the café: Agostina Segatori in Le Tambourin* (cat. 84 and fig. 84d) could have been made in Antwerp, but that is not entirely certain (see cats. 47, 48, note 23).

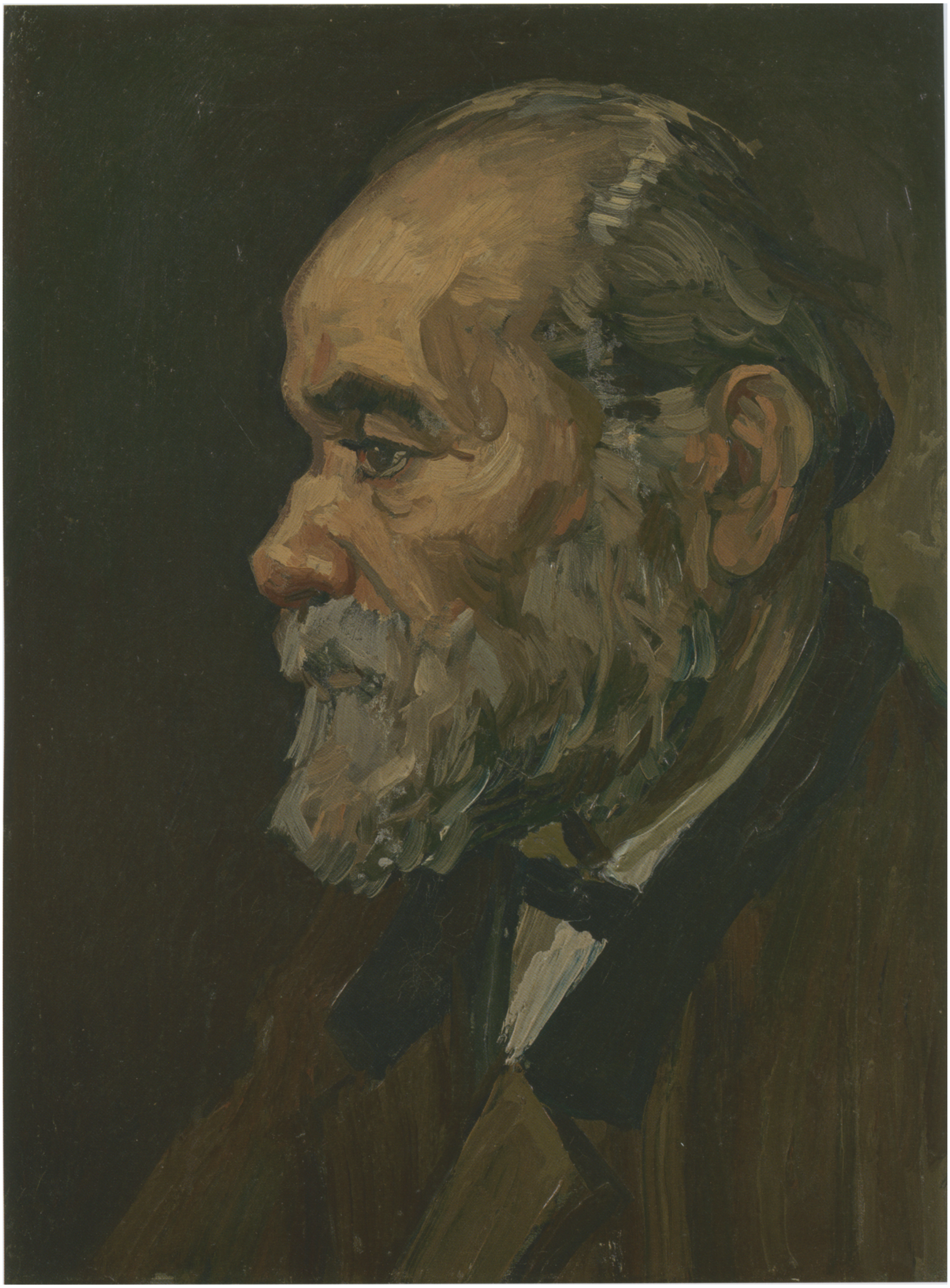
2 At the beginning of January 1886 Van Gogh was still working on two portraits which he had started at the end of December (see letter 551). He said he had hopes of new commissions just before he started at the academy (letter 553), but there is no evidence that they ever materialised.
For his enrolment at the academy see letter 553 and Drawings 3, p. 64. It is not impossible that he also made studies of heads during the painting lessons, and if he did one of them would probably have been the 'head of a child' mentioned in letter 554.

3 His drawing activities are described in Drawings 3, pp. 15 and 64.

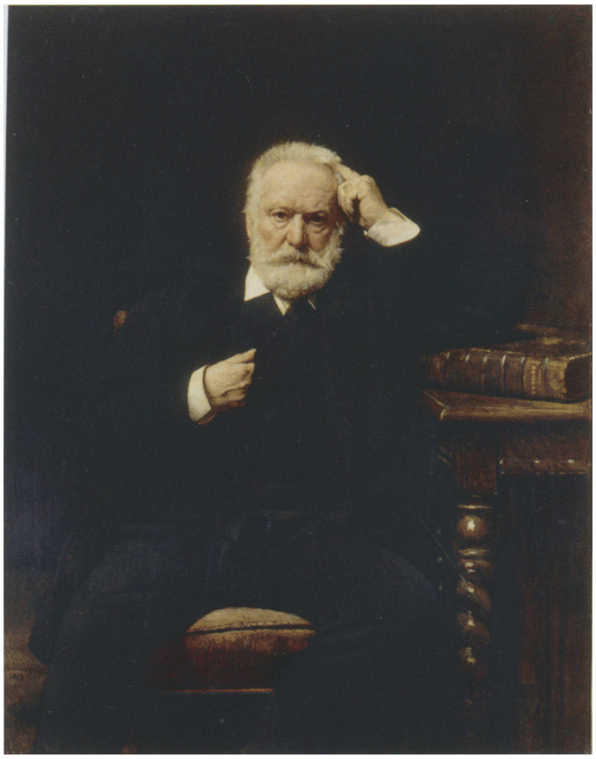
4 It is not known whether he painted more portraits of men while in Antwerp; see note 1.

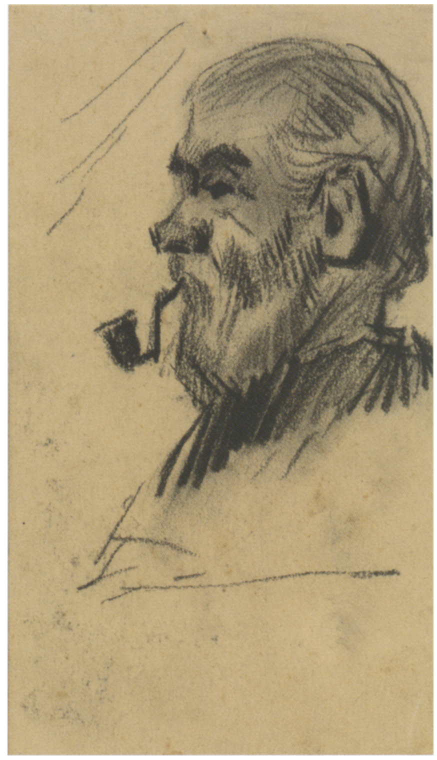
5 Van Gogh was an admirer of Hugo's oeuvre, and mentioned his state funeral on 31 May 1885 in letter 507 of early June. He knew the author's portrait by Léon Bonnat (1833-1922), which he had called 'beautiful, really beautiful' back in 1882 [288]. He probably only knew it from reproductions, one of which was published in *Le Monde Illustré* of 2 August 1879, no. 1166. See also letter 158.

6 Van Gogh became friendly with the model, and even called him 'comrade' [565]. The old Frenchman was poor and ill, and would probably have to have an operation, which he was dreading. Van Gogh, who was on the point of leaving Antwerp, was prepared to stay on for 'a few days longer in March for his sake' [565]. In 1947 Vincent Willem van Gogh said that Joop Siedenburg, the owner of the art dealers Buffa & Zonen, had told him that the man was called 'Peerke' (letter of 13 October 1947 to M.E. Tralbaut, b 8060).



45 Portrait of an old man





45a Léon Bonnat, *Portrait of Victor Hugo*, 1879. Versailles, Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon.

45b *Head of an old man* (F 1359 JH 984), 1885. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

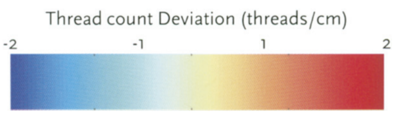
Van Gogh also portrayed him in a small sketchbook drawing (fig. 45b), again in profile, but it is impossible to say whether it preceded the study in oils or not.[7]

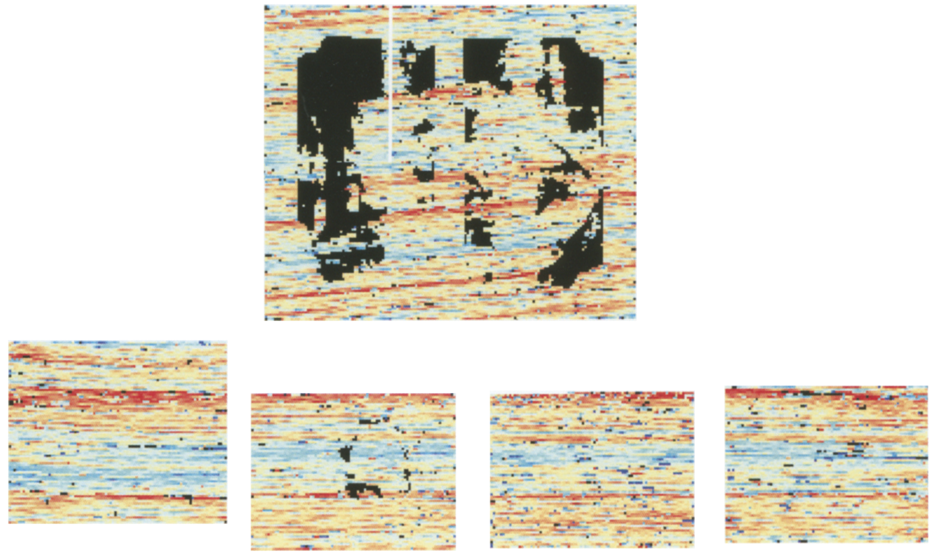
The portrait is on a commercially prepared canvas with a very pale pink ground that is identical to that of *Houses seen from the back* (cat. 49; see Table 3.4, nos. 19, 20).[8] Automated studies of the weave patterns visible in X-rays further revealed that not only do these two canvases match exactly but so too do those used for an earlier variant of *Houses seen from the back* (fig. 49g) and two works from the Nuenen period: *Birds' nests* and *Still life with Bible*, both of which were painted in the autumn of 1885.[9] The same pattern of weft threads runs across the first four paintings, showing that the canvases were cut from adjacent positions spanning the approximately 2.10 m width of a commercial roll (fig. 45c). Strong cusped distortions, known as 'primary cusping', occur along the top of the canvas used for *Portrait of an old man* (cat. 45) and the right side of that used for *Birds' nests*, revealing that these two pieces were cut from the sides of the canvas roll fixed at intervals to the wooden priming frame. The canvases used for the two variants of *Houses seen from the back* (cat. 49 and fig. 49g) do not have equivalent cusping, since they were cut from the middle part of the roll, in between the previous two. Furthermore, the latter two canvases display a match in the warp with the other work from Nuenen, *Still life with Bible*, suggesting that it also came from the same roll (fig. 45d). A reconstruction of the way in which the canvases were cut from this roll (see fig. 45e) makes it clear that those used for the three Antwerp paintings were simply from its end piece. Small cusps visible down the right edges of the three Antwerp pictures formed where the butt end of the roll was nailed to the short sides of the priming frame.[10]

Information from the letters might lead us to expect this course of affairs, since it is known that Van Gogh had 'tools' sent on to him in Antwerp from Nuenen [545], which, in addition to canvas, included stretchers or strainers the same size as the studies of heads he had made in Nuenen.[11] It is likely that he reused one of the stretching frames for three different paintings: *Portrait of an old man*, *Houses seen*

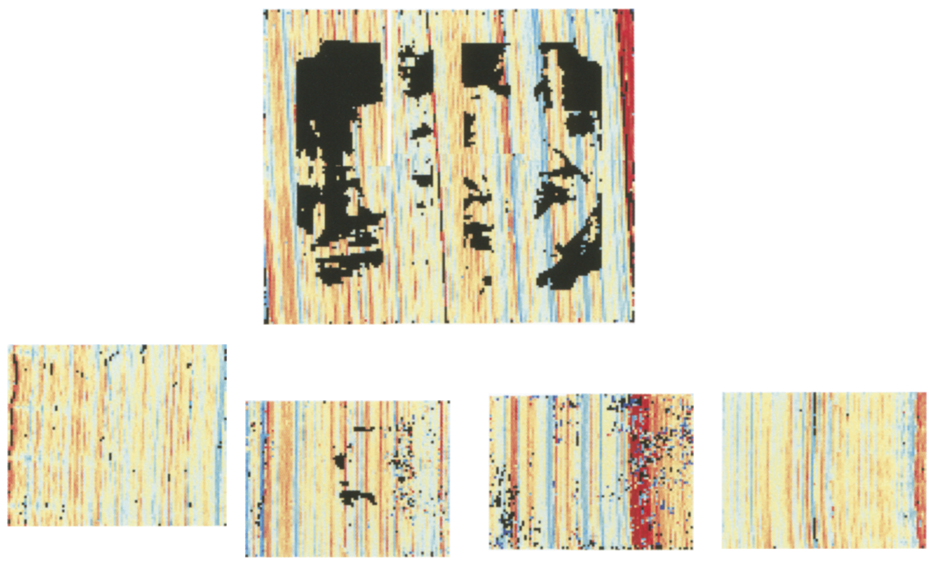
7 Drawings 3, cat. 210.
8 For the weave match between *Portrait of an old man* (cat. 45) and *Houses seen from the back* (cat. 49) see Johnson *et al.* 2009.
9 Paintings 1, cat. 39 (F 111 JH 939), cat. 42 (F 117, JH 946).
10 The adjacent *Birds' nests* has only traces of these cusps, since it was cut slightly further in from the end of the roll.
11 Before leaving for Antwerp he said that he was going to take paint and 'stretching frames' with him [542], and he ordered materials from Jan Baijens's shop in Eindhoven which he received in Antwerp on or about 6 December (see letter 546). Shortly afterwards he bought some pigments from local colourmen, as well as 'two new types of drawing brush which I'm extremely pleased with and with which I can work more accurately' [547].

45c Weave map depicting the subtle variation in spacing of the weft threads. The same banded pattern continues through four canvases spanning the width of a commercial roll, showing that they were cut side by side. The black spots are where the canvas weave is unclear in the X-ray.

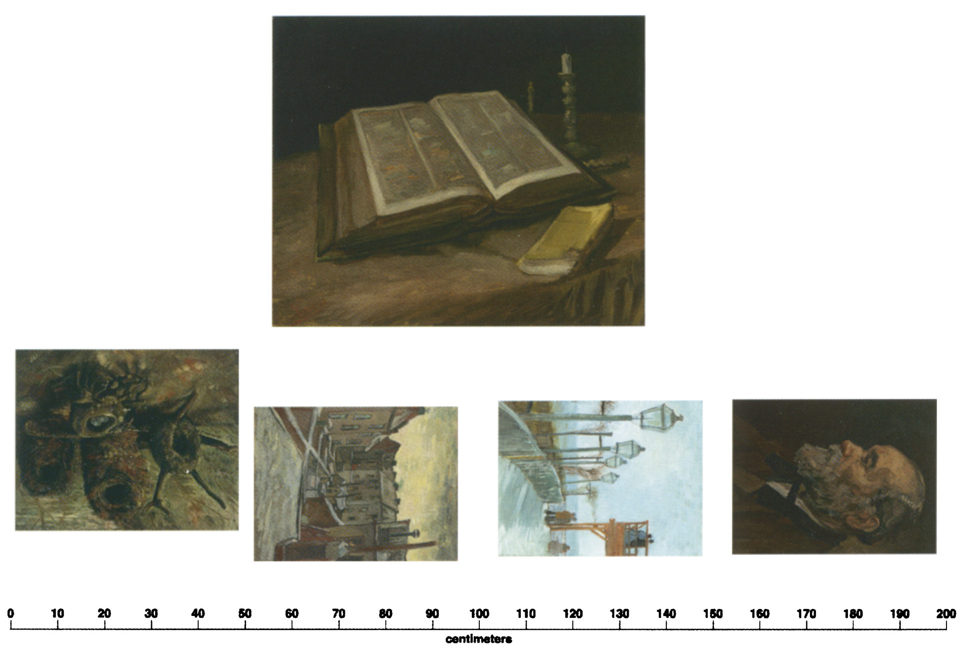




45d Weave map depicting subtle variation in the spacing of the warp threads. The same banded pattern unites three canvases situated in the middle part of the roll. The black spots are where the canvas weave is unclear in the X-ray.



45e Reconstruction of the way in which the paintings were cut from the canvas roll.





45f Detail of the underdrawing of the mouth.

from the back (cat. 49) and the variant of the latter (fig. 49g). They are all the same size, at any rate, and pinholes around the edges of *Houses seen from the back* (cat. 49) confirm that the canvas was indeed subsequently removed from its stretching frame and pinned up flat (see cat. 49).[12]

Van Gogh built the scene up tonally from a fairly dark background. He covered the pale pink ground with grey paint (a mixture of white, black, and some red and blue to create a lively effect), which he applied in zigzag streaks with a broad brush. It is a method that he borrowed from 16th- and 17th-century Flemish painting, which he went to study in Antwerp's Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten immediately on his arrival in Antwerp.[13] He was particularly interested in the work of Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640),[14] who was in the habit of applying a streaky grey or brown layer to the light ground.[15] The 17th-century master worked to both the light and the dark from this lively mid-tone, allowing the underlying layer to show through the surface, particularly in cool flesh tones. Van Gogh's grey layer, however, was more opaque, and he then painted it out completely with thick paint, apart from a few exceptions in the hair and the beard. He evidently discovered by trial and error that he was unable to handle this underlying layer as effectively as Rubens.

After applying the grey underlayer he made an underdrawing with black drawing material that can be seen with the naked eye around the mouth and the cheekbone (fig. 45f).[16] Although he seems to have followed that underdrawing closely in the paint, he rechecked the proportions within the portrait as he was painting it. He did so by measuring the distance between two key points. Those aids are clearly visible under the stereomicroscope as two small arcs which may have been scratched in the wet paint with a fingernail: one by the cheekbone and the other at the same height near the eyebrow on the other side.[17]

The execution of the painting has more in common with the studies of heads that Van Gogh made in Nuenen (see Paintings 1, cats. 10-18) than with his later Antwerp portraits (cats. 46-48, fig. 46a). As in his studies of the Brabant country-folk, the transition from portrait to background is sharply defined. Another feature that the picture has in common with his earlier manner is that, in contrast to the head, the background is fairly smoothly painted and the man's clothing is described with long, broad brushstrokes. The pigments – Naples yellow, bone black and umber – are identical to those of his Nuenen palette, and there are none of the bold pigments found in his later Antwerp work (cats. 47-49).

The brushwork differs from that of his Brabant studies, being far less cautious, more fluent and spontaneous than in his studies of heads of 1884-85. The buttery paint of this portrait was applied with loose, overlapping strokes. Van Gogh worked swiftly, without mixing the colours on his palette beforehand. The rapid movements resulted in the paint being pushed up slightly along the edges of the brushstrokes, as can be seen in the beard. These narrow ridges were also used to sharpen the contours here and there, on the edge of the collar, for instance.

The flesh colour differs from that of his earlier work. He had previously opted for earthy flesh tones, following the example of Jean-François Millet, but here he chose a lighter tone, which he felt was more typical of city dwellers.[18] He used a very fine, pointed brush for the hairs of the eyebrow and eyelashes, probably one of the 'two new types of drawing brush' that he bought soon after his arrival [547].

12 Van Gogh was not yet using standard sizes of canvas in Nuenen, although the bars on his 'stretching frames' were based on standard lengths (see Table 3.4). The approximately 5 mm extra height of *Portrait of an old man* compared to the other two canvases may readily be explained as the outcome of later treatment, when the canvas was wax-resin lined and re-tensioned on a new stretcher. Cat. 49 has not been lined, but is similarly mounted on a new stretcher.
13 There are no earlier examples of a grey underlayer of this kind in his oeuvre, as far as is known. He conducted a similar experiment in an earlier work painted in Drenthe, F 17 JH 395 (Paintings 1, cat. 3, esp. p. 46), but the layer applied over the ground there is reddish brown, not grey.
14 Whose paintings he praised in his first letter from Antwerp (letter 544).
15 For Rubens's use of grey or brown intermediate layers see Plesters 1983.
16 Examination with infrared reflectography did not reveal any further details of this underdrawing.
17 There is a similar minuscule incision in the dark paint of the collar, with which Van Gogh wanted to indicate the edge of a fold.
18 Letter 550: 'I really like the models here because they're so very different from the models in the country. And above all because the character is something so very different. And the contrast gives me new ideas, particularly for the flesh tones'.

In the hope of being admitted to the *Peinture de Figures et d'Accessoires* course of the Antwerp academy, which was already in progress, Van Gogh showed this study together with another, unknown Antwerp portrait and three paintings he had brought with him from Nuenen to Karel Verlat (1824-90), the director and the teacher of the painting course.[19] He said that the painting was 'good', and on 17 January 1886 gave Van Gogh permission to attend the last lessons of the semester [565].[20] So the confidently painted head proved its value, and it is not surprising that Van Gogh told Theo that he would be bringing it to Paris [565].[21]

19 Letter 552; he announced his intention in letter 551. The works he brought with him were ***Still life with Bible*** (F 117 JH 946), ***Avenue of poplars*** (F 45 JH 959) and an unknown landscape with a mill; see Paintings 1, cat. 42, p. 225.
20 He joined the course on 18 January and it ended in late January/early February (see letter 557).
21 In Nuenen he had promised to send Theo the first studies he made in Antwerp (letter 543), but he evidently abandoned that idea.

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 61, vol. 2, pl. LV; Vanbeselaere 1937 II, p. 541; De la Faille 1939, p. 180, no. 225; Tralbaut 1948, pp. 192-95, 283, no. 13; Tralbaut 1955 II, pp. 10, 11; Tralbaut 1958, pp. 21, 39, 40; Tralbaut 1963 II, pp. 88, 89; London 1968-69, p. 54, no. 57; De la Faille 1970, pp. 107, 619; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 88; Hulsker 1977, pp. 213, 214; Hulsker 1980, pp. 213, 214; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 150, 151, 323, no. 1.99; Van der Wolk 1987, p. 278; Rome 1988, no. 19; Hulsker 1996, pp. 213, 216; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 46, 57, 65, 72, note 20, p. 73, notes 24, 50, 53; Letters 2009, letter 547, note 2, letter 552, note 9, letter 553, note 2, letter 565, note 1.

EXHIBITIONS
1947 Groningen, no. 19; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 34; 1951-52 Nijmegen & Alkmaar, no. 4; 1952 Enschede, no. 13; 1952 Eindhoven, no. 14; 1953 Zundert, no. 11; 1953 Hoensbroek, no. 24; 1953 IJmuiden, no. 11; 1953 Assen, no. 10; 1955 Antwerp, no. 119; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 58; 1960-61 Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg & Toronto, no. 18; 1968-69 London, no. 57; 1969-70 Los Angeles, Saint Louis & Philadelphia, no. 10; 1970-71 Baltimore, San Francisco & New York, no. 10; 1971-72 Paris, no. 12; 1972 Bordeaux, no. 4; 1972-73 Strasbourg & Bern, no. 4; 1988 Rome, no. 19; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 12; 2008-09 Marseille, no. 20.

46
Portrait of an old woman

Antwerp, mid- to late December 1885
Oil on canvas
40.0 x 50.5 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 10 V/1962
F 174 JH 978

Van Gogh hoped to master all the facets of portraiture while he was in Antwerp, but from the middle of December, when he learned that local art dealers considered that 'women's heads or figures of women are most likely to sell' [548], he switched his attention from men to women in his hunt for models. He painted at least seven studies of women in Antwerp, only four of which have survived: *Portrait of a prostitute* (cat. 47), *Head of a prostitute* (cat. 48), *Head of a woman with a scarlet bow in her hair* (fig. 46a) and this *Portrait of an old woman.*[1]

De la Faille called this painting *The wet nurse* in 1928,[2] and that title was adopted by almost everyone, although the Dutch *voedster* was occasionally mistranslated into English as 'midwife' (*vroedvrouw*).[3] However, it is doubtful whether she is indeed a wet nurse,[4] for there is nothing in the painting to suggest that she is. She is an elderly woman with grey hair and brown eyes wearing a dark, blue-black jacket and a bright white cap edged with piping that looks as if it is starched. Caps like this were worn by housemaids out in the country, but were popular headgear among older women in the cities.[5] The woman's face is a little coarse, but expressive. As far as the perspective is concerned, the *en trois quarts* view is not entirely correct. As in some of the studies of heads made in Nuenen, the eyes do not lie on the same line between the ears,[6] while the side of the partly averted face on the left is depicted almost head on.

De la Faille originally thought that the *Portrait of an old woman* dated from the Nuenen period, but Vanbeselaere came to a different conclusion in 1937.[7] He relocated it to Antwerp, whereupon De la Faille accepted both dates as possible in the revised, 1939 edition of his oeuvre catalogue. Tralbaut then criticised this lack of clarity.[8] Like Vanbeselaere he believed that it was painted in Antwerp, and that has been accepted ever since.

This portrait is larger than the studies of heads that Van Gogh made in Brabant, in which the faces are wedged in between the sides of the paintings, as it were, so unlike *Portrait of an old man* (cat. 45) it was not made on one of the stretching frames he had brought with him from Brabant. Nor, though, is it a ready-made canvas bought in Antwerp, even though the dimensions were based on a standard canvas, differing little from those of a *figure* 8 (46 x 38 cm). Interestingly, the kind of canvas and the ground correspond to those of *Head of a skeleton with a burning cigarette* (cat. 50), which by contrast is of a standard size (Table 3.4, nos. 16, 17).

The larger size of *Portrait of an old woman* was a deliberate choice. In his letter of 14 December 1885 Van Gogh had said that the canvases he had brought from Nuenen 'were too small for the heads'.[9] He felt that he needed 'more room for my surroundings', which was his word for his new way of painting backgrounds [547]. He had first tried it out in a lost portrait of a woman which, unlike the almost simultaneous *Portrait of an old man* (cat. 45), did not have an earth-coloured background

1 See cat. 45, and note 1 there.
2 De la Faille 1928, no. 174.
3 San Francisco etc. 1958-59, no. 14. In London 1968-69, no. 56, this was rightly corrected to 'The wet nurse', but that did not eliminate the mistranslation, as can be seen from De la Faille 1970, p. 109.
4 Tralbaut 1948, p. 230, was the first to doubt the accuracy of De la Faille's 1928 title, but his scepticism was not taken seriously until 1987, when the compilers of the Van Gogh Museum collection catalogue (Amsterdam 1987) gave it a neutral description.
5 E-mail from Frieda Sorber, 5 June 2000, and letter from Henri Vannoppen, 1 August 2000.
6 See F 130 JH 692 and F 160 JH 722, for example (Paintings 1, cats. 12, 13).
7 Vanbeselaere 1937 I, p. 416, and Vanbeselaere 1937 II, p. 542.
8 Tralbaut 1948, pp. 230-33.
9 Since Van Gogh did not purchase his canvases ready-made in Nuenen, as far as we know, it seems that he used the term 'canvases' here to mean the constituent canvas and frames he had brought with him (see also cat. 45, note 11).



46 Portrait of an old woman



46a *Head of a woman with a scarlet bow in her hair* (F 207 JH 979), 1885. Private collection.

but a 'greyish yellow' one [547]. That lighter colour had a more spatial effect, which he wanted to enhance in the portraits that followed.

As in that lost portrait of a woman, he abandoned his traditional, neutral background colour in this one of an old woman. Nowadays it looks greyish and greenish blue, enlivened with touches of ochre here and there, but on the edges covered by the frame and tape it can be seen that it was originally a greyish purple, which would have had a greater spatial effect due to the nuances of colour (p. 135, fig. 60).[10] For the purple mixture he used an organic red pigment, madder, which has largely faded.[11] Madder was considered to be one of the best pigments at the time because of its bright colour and relatively good light fastness, but because it was expensive it was often adulterated. Van Gogh had evidently got hold of an inferior sort which was mixed with cheap redwood, which discolours quickly.

The scene was painted rapidly, wet-into-wet, with Van Gogh working on the portrait and the background at the same time. The bow was reserved in the dress. There is an extremely thin underpainting in the clothing and the background that ranges from grey-blue to black-blue, on top of which he finished the portrait, probably in the same session. A similar thin draft, but then in blue and red, was found in *Head of a woman with a scarlet bow in her hair* (fig. 46a).[12] It is impossible to see whether the head is also underpainted, since it was done with opaque paint. The palette is not very pronounced, with just a strikingly bright orange in the neck and a pure dark red for the shell of the ear and the mouth. Van Gogh painted the bow, which is partly in shadow, in a slightly yellowish white so that it would stand out less than the bright white cap.

At some point *Portrait of an old woman* was placed on top of another work which was also not entirely dry, and became stuck to it, for there are scattered traces of a red colour on a white ground or underlayer on the impasto of the bow and the clothing. Traces of grey (again on a white ground or underlayer) were also found on the left side of the picture. A long coiled hair, presumably from the artist or his sitter, landed in the fresh paint at the right edge (p. 135, fig. 60).

There is no recognisable description of this portrait in the letters.[13] In any event, it was made after the middle of December, when Van Gogh decided to make his paintings larger. It is very closely related in style to *Head of a woman with a scarlet bow in her hair* (fig. 46a), which has an identical thin underpaint. The brushwork in both is rapid, broad and with less of an eye for detail and variation than in the other Antwerp portraits (cats. 45, 47, 48). Van Gogh mentions *Head of a woman with a scarlet bow in her hair* at the end of December 1885,[14] which is why this picture is placed in the period mid- to late December.

10 Both De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 54, and Tralbaut 1948, p. 231, call the background grey, but it is impossible to deduce from this fairly vague description if fading had already started.
11 On red organic pigments and the problem of their degradation see pp. 134-38.
12 *Head of a woman with a scarlet bow in her hair* is on a different kind of canvas which closely matches that of *Portrait of an old man* (cat. 45) and *Houses seen from the back* (cat. 49), although the ground appears to be different, being white instead of pink.
13 Cat. 45, note 1, lists the female portraits described by Van Gogh in his Antwerp letters.
14 Letter 550.

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
De la Faille 1928, vol. I, p. 54, vol. 2, pl. XLV; Vanbeselaere 1937 I, p. 416; Vanbeselaere 1937 II, p. 542; De la Faille 1939, p. 127, no. 147; Tralbaut 1948, pp. 230-33, ill. XXII, p. 284, no. 33; Tralbaut 1958, pp. 52, 53; London 1968-69, p. 54, no. 56; De la Faille 1970, pp. 99, 108, 109, 618; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 88; Hulsker 1977, pp. 214-16; Hulsker 1980, pp. 214-16; Amsterdam 1987, p. 323, no. 1.98; Hulsker 1996, pp. 214, 215, 266; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 116, 124, 125, 129, 130, 134, 136, note 19; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 53, 65, 73, note 24.

Exhibitions
1928 Berlin, no. 9; 1928 Vienna, no. 5; 1928 Frankfurt am Main, no. 5; 1947 Groningen, no. 17; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 38; 1955 Antwerp, no. 124; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 63; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 14; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 16; 1968-69 London, no. 56; 1980 Mons, no. 23.

47
Portrait of a prostitute

48
Head of a prostitute

47
Antwerp, mid- to late December 1885
Oil on canvas
46.2 x 38.4 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 143 V/1962
F 207a JH 1204

Letter 550[?]

48
Antwerp, mid- to late December 1885
Oil on canvas
35.0 x 24.4 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 59 V/1962
F 206 JH 972

Letter 550[?]

Shortly after Van Gogh decided to concentrate on women in his hunt for models (see cat. 46) he managed to get 'a girl from a café chantant' to pose for him [550; fig. 46a]. For a while he pinned all his hopes on this kind of woman. Her looser morals meant that she would probably be more easily persuaded to visit an artist who was a complete stranger.[1] 'I must also try to make some acquaintances among the girls, which is *no easy task* with a purse with little in it', he wrote at the beginning of January 1886 [551].

He even told Theo that he might get portrait commissions from these working girls, which was not a very realistic idea.[2] To his mind there were other advantages to portraying 'girls', to use his term.[3] Not only could he practise depicting the faces of young urban women, but he could also attempt to capture 'a whore's expression' [550]. He hoped that the first would stand him in good stead as a portraitist, and that he could use the second to present himself as a representative of modern Realism, which considered prostitutes and courtesans as acceptable subjects.[4] Among other things, he thought that he would be able to follow in the footsteps of Rembrandt, whose *Bust of a young woman smiling (possibly the artist's wife Saskia van Uylenburgh)* he interpreted as being 'a whore's head' [550].[5]

Only one of the four surviving studies of women does not depict a 'girl' (cat. 46). The other three are clearly of women of the night. The model for *Head of a woman with a scarlet bow in her hair* (fig. 46a) was the girl from the café chantant,[6] while the women in the two other studies (cats. 47, 48) must be from the same circles. The one in cat. 47 is wearing a simple but low-cut dress, and unless it is meant to be fashionable evening wear (which is impossible, given Van Gogh's circle of acquaintances in Antwerp), she can only be a working girl. Her jewellery, which consists of an earring and a chain with a cross around her neck, tells us little about her status or profession, but her lips are painted red and her eyes are rimmed with black, just like the woman from the café chantant (fig. 46a). The eyes of the woman in the other painting (cat. 48) do not appear to be made up, but her lips are. She too is wearing a low-cut dress, the white colour of which makes it look like a nightgown, and together with her hair hanging loose, which was regarded as immoral at the time, it suggests that we are seeing a woman of the streets in her bedroom.[7]

There have been various suggestions as to the date of *Portrait of a prostitute* (cat. 47). It was not included in the 1928 or 1939 editions of De la Faille's oeuvre catalogue, but once the omission had been discovered Tralbaut unhesitatingly placed it in Van Gogh's Antwerp period.[8] That, however, was not adopted by the editors of

1 It is clear from his remark that 'she'd evidently had a few busy nights' a little later on in the letter that she was indeed a prostitute [550].
2 See letter 551.
3 He was using the word 'girl' as a synonym for 'mistress' or 'woman of the streets', which was a very common usage in the 19th century.
4 See letter 550.
5 Dresden, Gemäldegalerie. He had seen a photograph of this painting, but of course did not know the present-day title or interpretation; see letter 550, in which he praised the woman's 'mysterious smile'. See Hecht 2006, pp. 7, 8, for Van Gogh working in the spirit of Rembrandt.
6 He says in letter 550 that he depicted that woman in two paintings. The first portrait, in which he wanted to capture an expression that was 'a little Ecce Homo-like', has not survived. The second is fig. 46a. He may also have made a drawing of the model; see Drawings 3, pp. 59-62.
7 These conclusions are based on an e-mail from Frieda Sorber, 5 June 2000, and a letter from Henri Vannoppen, 1 August 2000.
8 Tralbaut 1948, pp. 205, 206, even believed that the painting was the study of a woman *en trois quarts* described in letter 551. What he did not realise is that that was the first study of 'a girl from a café chantant' mentioned in letter 550. The second study of that model was F 207 JH 979 (fig. 46a), and the woman in that painting bears no resemblance to the one in *Portrait of a prostitute* (cat. 47).



47 Portrait of a prostitute



48 Head of a prostitute

the 1970 De la Faille, who shifted it to Paris.[9] Hulsker then suggested the early months of 1887 in view of 'the much easier style of painting and the delicate touches', while Welsh-Ovcharov thought of the summer or autumn of the previous year.[10] The work was again assigned to the Antwerp period in the Van Gogh Museum's 1987 collection catalogue, although without further explanation.[11]

The painting is quite definitely from the Antwerp period. The lavish use of cobalt blue for both the dress and the background fits in with Van Gogh's current enthusiasm for this 'divine colour'[550], which he had bought at the beginning of December.[12] He also used it in the background of *Head of a prostitute* (cat. 48). In both cases he toned it down by mixing it with other colours and white, for it was not until Paris that he started using cobalt at full strength.

The choice of a bluish background was the logical outcome of Van Gogh's current need to create more space around the heads of his models (see cat. 46), for which he found cobalt blue the most suitable solution [550]. He painted both works on ready-stretched canvases on frames of a standard size (Table 3.3, no. 4, and Table 3.5, no. 47). For *Portrait of a prostitute* (cat. 47) he used a size specially designed for portraits called *portrait* 8, which measures 46 x 38 cm. For *Head of a prostitute* (cat. 48) he chose the landscape size *paysage* 5 (24 x 35 cm), a less logical option, which he turned through 90°.

Although there are minor differences in the brushwork, the two paintings are very close in style. The rendering of the hair with short, sometimes angular strokes is identical, as is the use of long strokes to enliven the background. There is also the same untidy impasto for the light passages in the faces and torsos. Another common feature is the free handling of the sitter's contours. Van Gogh worked with a loose brush, alternating between the figures and the backgrounds – a manner that would have been prompted by his need to give his pictures more room to breathe. As a result of this and the bright tonality of the background, these studies differ quite considerably from his Nuenen head studies and his very first works in Antwerp (cats. 45, 46), in which there is a sharp dividing line between head and background.

The stylistic similarities strengthen the idea that the two pictures are of the same model. They both have fairly dark hair with an identical wiry fringe. In *Portrait of a prostitute* the woman's hair is up, but in the other painting it is hanging loose on her shoulders. The eyebrows are the same and the mouths also look similar, but because the heads are positioned differently within the picture surface – one *en trois quarts* and the other fully frontal – it is difficult to compare the heads in detail.[13]

Like his other Antwerp studies, Van Gogh painted *Portrait of a prostitute* (cat. 47) in a single session, wet-into-wet in other words. He unified the scene by repeating the bright blue of the background in the blue of the woman's dress, but in a slightly weakened form. Like *Houses seen from the back* (cat. 49), the canvas has a pale pink ground, parts of which have also been left visible in the finished picture, near the dress, for example, where the pink forms an effective contrast with the blue. Van Gogh exploited that contrast by painting pink highlights on the blue. This alternation of the two colours is matched by the colour contrast between the brighter flesh tones and the blue of the background. He also repeated the light flesh tones in the hair and had the bright red lines of the woman's facial features recur in the organic

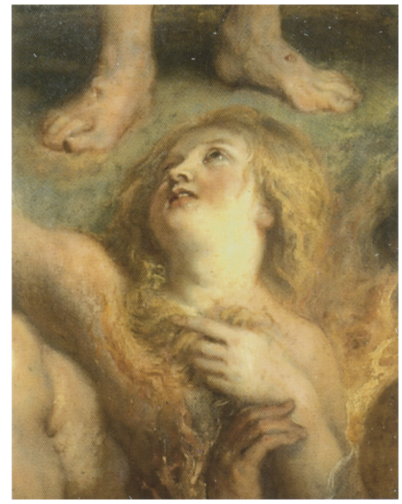
9 Report of the editorial meeting held on 22 January 1969, The Hague, Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD), Archives, and De la Faille 1970, p. 113.
10 See Hulsker 1996, p. 266, and Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 224.
11 Amsterdam 1987, p. 323, no. 1.101.
12 'The most expensive is still sometimes the cheapest. Cobalt especially – it can't be compared with any other blue as regards the delicate tones that one can get with it' [549].
13 Only the eyes differ slightly in colour. They are brown in *Portrait of a prostitute* (cat. 47) and black with a hint of green in *Head of a prostitute* (cat. 48), but this could be due to chance or a slightly different fall of light when the woman was posing.



47a Raking light detail of cat. 48.



47b Peter Paul Rubens, *Teresa of Avila*, c. 1630. Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten.



47c Detail of fig. 47b.

red of the right-hand neckline of her dress, as well as in the subtle red accent on the sleeve below. The thick clump of white for the earring was not squeezed directly onto the canvas from the tube but was loosely mixed with pink paint. The clump later broke off, exposing the delicate stripes of colour within.

Head of a prostitute (cat. 48) was also painted in a single session, and it looks as if Van Gogh first laid in a mid-tone, from which he worked to the light and the dark passages. The lively brushstrokes are stacked one on top of the other, completely hiding the ground.[14] He was even more successful here than in the other painting in evoking a nimble lighting with his lively, assured impasto, the varied modelling of which is clearly revealed by raking light (fig. 47a). He wanted to draw 'the features in a face with strokes of pure red', and although he said that he had learned that technique mainly from Rubens, the result cannot be compared with that of the Flemish master. Van Gogh's brushstroke is coarse rather than fine, and as such it is more similar to the work of Frans Hals (1589-1666) and Jacob Jordaens (1593-1678), whose 'heads and hands' he also praised [547]. His nonchalant use of impasto for the light passages in the face and the torso, on the other hand, is demonstrably borrowed from Rubens, and specifically from *Teresa of Avila* in the Antwerp museum (fig. 47b), in which there are remarkably arbitrary, light highlights in the flesh tones of the women in the foreground (fig. 47c).[15]

Ugly drying cracks appeared in the black paint of the hair on the woman's right shoulder, probably very soon after the work was completed, revealing an impasted, slightly pinkish underlayer. This light-coloured paint, which must have been used to indicate the shoulder, was not dry enough when the hair was painted on top, causing drying cracks to form in the dark paint. Van Gogh then tried to camouflage the premature cracks with thin, black retouchings, and at the same time added the black border running down the left side with a single brushstroke 1 cm wide.[16] Its purpose is not entirely clear, but perhaps he wanted to see how the painting would look in a black frame, which was his preferred surround.[17] There are similar black borders, but then on all sides, in his *Terrace at the Luxembourg Gardens* (fig. 47d),

14 As a result of damage, this is only visible in the upper left background and in the top part of the left shoulder. Van Dantzig wrongly stated in 1952 that the visible ground was an original part of Van Gogh's technique (p. 77). One of the features of the portrait that Van Dantzig described as exemplifying typical characteristics of Van Gogh's technique was the fact that the 'canvas is practically bare and shows through at several places in the background, on the left above the hair'. Microscopic examination revealed that these areas are in fact the result of paint loss through wear and flaking.
15 Van Gogh called these figures 'prime quality' [544] and even started looking for similar blonde models himself [547].
16 A paint cross-section confirms that the black border was applied after the finished portrait had dried, before any dirt had been deposited between the paint layers or the painting had been varnished. The black paint consists of a mixture of black, red, green and white pigments that was also used elsewhere in the work. It was applied at the same time as the black he used to camouflage the cracks in the woman's right shoulder. Both paints had the same fluid consistency and appearance.
17 See Van Tilborgh 1995, p. 163. There are also black borders around some of Van Gogh's Nuenen drawings.



47d *Terrace at the Luxembourg Gardens* (F 223 JH 1111), 1886. Williamstown (Mass.), Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.

View from Theo's apartment (fig. 56d) and *Chinese asters and gladioli in a vase* (private collection).[18]

A very precise date was given to *Head of a prostitute* in 1928, when it was identified with the woman's portrait which Van Gogh made at about the same time as the *Portrait of an old man* (cat. 45).[19] In it he had 'introduced lighter tones in the flesh, white tinted with carmine, vermilion, yellow, and a light background in greyish yellow, from which the face is separated only by the black hair. Lilac tones in the clothes' [547]. Those pigments may have been used for the flesh tones of the model in *Head of a prostitute*, but apart from that there is nothing in the description that justifies this identification. To start with, the background is not greyish yellow but greenish yellow, and there is so little of the woman's body visible that the word 'clothes' would be a gross exaggeration, while the only article of clothing to be seen contains no lilac.

So the identification is incorrect, but it is not impossible that the painting is indeed described in Van Gogh's correspondence. If both cats. 47 and 48 are of the same model then they can be linked to two paintings of one and the same woman which have so far been regarded as lost.[20] Around 15 December Van Gogh announced that he had 'a half promise of getting a model for a portrait' [548]. That promise came good, for a few days later he reported that 'I've also now had a definite promise that I'll make a portrait of someone, and then two studies for me in return' [549], and at the end of December he wrote to say that 'Furthermore, I've done that particular portrait that I told you I was in discussions about, and a study of that head for myself' [550].

If one assumes that cats. 47 and 48 are of the same model, this would mean that *Portrait of a prostitute* (cat. 47) is the 'portrait' he speaks of in the letter, for the woman is in her Sunday best, which she is not in cat. 48. There she is shown with her hair hanging loose, and an intimate, erotically charged look of that kind was something that benefited the artist but not the model, for Van Gogh was hoping to make a name for himself with paintings of prostitutes and thus of 'a whore's expression' [550], and it very much looks as if *Head of a prostitute* was his first study in that direction. In any event, 'a study of that head for myself' certainly suits it.[21]

The only fact that argues against this interpretation is that Van Gogh kept both works for himself. That was not the agreement he had entered into, but one wonders whether one should attach much importance to that. The model could have abandoned her right to a portrait for any number of reasons, just as Van Gogh

18 The latter work is F 247 JH 1149. As with cat. 49, the dark painted borders around F 223 JH 1111, *Terrace at the Luxembourg Gardens* and F 265 JH 1100, *View from Theo's apartment* were added on top of the dry paint layer of the background, overlapping the red signature in the latter case. The black border around the still life on the other hand (F 247 JH 1149), was filled into a reserve area in the background, suggesting that it was planned in advance. For information on the first two works we are grateful to Sandy Weber, paintings conservator at Williamstown Art Conservation Centre, USA, and Simone Mancini, Paintings Conservator at the National Gallery of Ireland.

19 De la Faille 1928, no. 206, where it was also asserted that it is identical with a *Study of a woman's head* that was included as no. 74 in Amsterdam 1905. That turned out to be incorrect, for that work was F 357 JH 1216 (Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 90).

20 Hecht 2006, pp. 7, 8, suggested that it was identical with the portrait of the girl from the café chantant with the slightly 'Ecce Homo-like' expression, but that is a mistake, for that painting is lost (see note 6).

21 This might also be suggested by the size, for unlike the other female portraits (cats. 46, 47, and fig. 46a) he departed from the standard size that he preferred. There is less space around the head, and since he had deliberately switched to a larger size for his new experiments in portraiture (on which see cat. 46) this also seems to suggest that there was another intention behind the work.

made only two studies, not three, as his letters show.[22] Something else that favours this interpretation is that it reduces the number of uncertainties surrounding the identification of the works mentioned in the Antwerp correspondence. As noted above, only five portraits survive from this period, whereas eight are mentioned in the letters. Only two can be linked to works known today: cat. 45 and fig. 46a.[23] This means that six of the eight have to be regarded as lost, and that there is no mention at all in the letters of three of the five surviving portraits (cats. 46-48).

However, the figures improve if one considers the identification proposed above. No more than four of the eight works mentioned in the letters would then be missing, while only one of the five surviving paintings would go unmentioned: cat. 46. Since there are no large gaps in the Antwerp correspondence, the latter result seems more likely than the former. It is for this reason, and because of the strong suspicion that the works were painted at almost the same time and show the same model, that we are dating both these paintings to mid- to late December 1885.

22 Although Van Gogh suggests otherwise in his letter, there is a possibility that he did indeed paint the third piece but later painted over it in Paris. One candidate would be the portrait of a woman beneath *In the café: Agostina Segatori in Le Tambourin* (cat. 84, fig. 84d), but it cannot be demonstrated that it was painted in Antwerp; see cat. 45, note 1.
23 See cat. 45, note 1, and note 22 above.

Cat. 47

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Bonger 1890, no. 20 [Etude de femme]; not in De la Faille 1928; not in De la Faille 1939; Tralbaut 1948, pp. 205-10, 284, no. 31; Tralbaut 1958, pp. 46, 47; De la Faille 1970, pp. 108, 180, 183, 619; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 89, 123, note 37, 224; Hulsker 1977, p. 266; Hulsker 1980, p. 266; Amsterdam 1987, p. 323, no. 1.101; Hulsker 1996, p. 266; London etc. 2000-01, p. 226; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 46, 51, 63, 73, note 24; Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 284; Letters 2009, letter 550, note 3.

Exhibitions
1948-49 The Hague, no. 37; 1950 Hilversum, no. 10; 1951 Lyon & Grenoble, no. 11; 1951 Arles, no. 11; 1952 Enschede, no. 15; 1952 Eindhoven, no. 15; 1955 Antwerp, no. 123; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 62; 1957 Breda, no. 35; 1957 Marseille, no. 20; 1957-58 Leiden & Schiedam, no. 8; 1958 Deventer, no. 7; 1958 Mons, no. 7; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 12; 1960-61 Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg & Toronto, no. 19; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 14; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 14; 1963 Humlebæk, no. 11; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 11; 1965 Charleroi & Ghent, no. 7; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 11; 2000-01 London, Amsterdam & Williamstown, unnumbered.

Cat. 48

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Bonger 1890, no. 26 [Etude de tête (jeune fille)]; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 62, vol. 2, pl. LV; Vanbeselaere 1937 II, p. 541; De la Faille 1939, p. 178, no. 222; Tralbaut 1948, pp. 195-99, 283, no. 11; Van Dantzig 1952, pp. 77, 78; Tralbaut 1958, pp. 21, 41, 42; De la Faille 1970, pp. 107, 619; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 88; Hulsker 1977, pp. 213, 214, 216; Hulsker 1980, pp. 213, 214; Amsterdam 1987, p. 323, no. 1.100; Tokyo 1994, pp. 34, 35, 114, no. 1; Hulsker 1996, pp. 213, 216; Amsterdam 2003, p. 256, no. 121; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 46, 53, 68, 73, note 24; Hecht 2006, pp. 7,8; Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 284; Letters 2009, letter 547, note 3, letter 550, note 4.

Exhibitions
1947 Groningen, no. 18; 1948 Bergen & Oslo, no. 8; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 33; 1953 The Hague, no. 47; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 49; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 55; 1954 Zürich, no. 11; 1954-55 Bern, no. 12; 1955 Antwerp, no. 118; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 57; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 10; 1957-58 Stockholm, no. 104, Luleå, Kiruna, Umeå, Östersund, Sandviken & Gothenburg, no cat. known; 1963 Antwerp, no. 39; 1980 Mons, no. 24; 1985-86 Tokyo & Nagoya, no. 19; 1994 Tokyo, no. 1; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 13; 2003 Amsterdam I, no. 121; 2006 Amsterdam, no cat.

49
Houses seen from the back

Antwerp, between 9 December 1885 and the end of February 1886
Oil on canvas
43.7 x 33.3 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 142 V/1962
F 260 JH 970

Van Gogh made several city views while in Antwerp, but the only surviving one is this charming little study (cat. 49).[1] He had no intention of selling it, because art dealers were not interested in the grey, plastered backs of ordinary houses. In the foreground is the flat roof of an extension, and behind it are back yards separated by walls in which all sorts of small structures have been erected. Snow is lying everywhere, but it is already beginning to melt here and there. The chimneys are smoking, and a fire or lamp is burning in the house on the right.[2]

It has been suggested that there is a connection with Gustave Doré's illustration *Over London – by rail* from *London – a pilgrimage* of 1872 (fig. 49a), which Van Gogh admired, but it is no more than a coincidental similarity.[3] Van Gogh had already demonstrated that he had a fondness for cluttered back yards in the humbler parts of a city, and he needed no artistic justification for what reality presented to him ready-made.[4] Above all he wanted to capture the mood of the place, and barely made an attempt to get the perspective right, as can be seen from the incorrect way many of the windows are depicted.

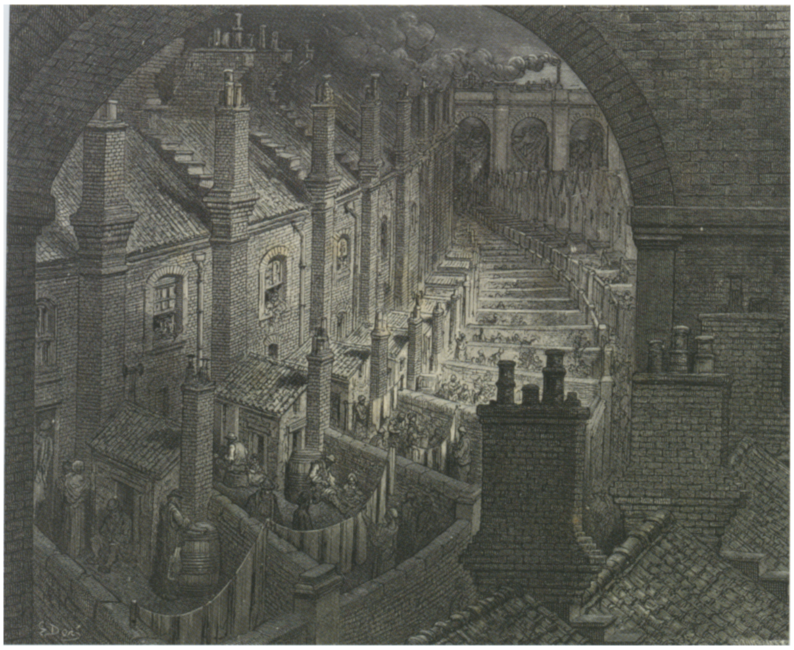
When he arrived in Antwerp he had rented a small room in a house at 194 (Lange) Beeldekensstraat (rue des Images). This is a view from the back of that house.[5] In 1948 Tralbaut published some photographs of the complex of buildings at the back (fig. 49b) and although a lot had changed in the interim, the positions of the walls and roofs show that it is the same block.[6] We are looking south, with the backs of the houses on Pollepelstraat on the left and those of Korte Van Bloerstraat on the right. The blocks of houses date from the 1860s, when buildings began encroaching on the rural surroundings of the centre of Antwerp.

A construction drawing of the house dating from 1922 reveals the precise spot where Van Gogh made his painting (fig. 49c).[7] He lived in the front or back room on the second floor. It has been suggested that the view is from that floor, but that is incorrect.[8] We are looking out over the extension at the back of the house, and that could only be done from the window in the staircase between the first and second floors.[9] Van Gogh stood on the small landing at the turn of the stairs, where there would have been just enough room for an easel. Since another floor stood on top of the extension in 1922 and the window in the staircase had been moved roughly half a floor up, it is no longer possible to reconstruct the exact vantage point, but photographs taken low down from that new spot almost exactly match the view in the painting (fig. 49d).[10]

1 Van Gogh painted five views in Antwerp: this *Houses seen from the back*, a view of the Steen (letters 548, 549), two scenes in a park (letter 546), and a painting with the same subject as cat. 49. The latter work was overpainted (see this entry), and the view of the Steen and the two park scenes are no longer known.
2 The green parts of the windows of the houses are probably green glass.
3 Gustave Doré and [William] Blanchard Jerrold, *London – a pilgrimage*, London 1872, facing p. 120. See letters 234 and 267 for Van Gogh's admiration for this book. The association was first made in Kyoto/Tokyo 1992, p. 58, no. 1.
4 See, for example, the Hague drawings F 944 JH 153 and F 939 JH 150 of similar back yards seen from a high vantage point.
5 The house is now no. 224. Van Gogh would later record the view from Theo's apartment in Paris; see cat. 56, figs. 56d, 73c and 73d, cat. 95, and figs. 95a, 95b.
6 For the house see Tralbaut 1948, pp. 182, 183, the photographs being fig. X, facing p. 65, and fig. XI, facing p. 80.
7 *Ontwerp tot het veranderen van een huis staande Beeldekens straat 224*, Antwerp, Stadsarchief, Bouwdossiers 1922/12592, no. 7097 (application dated 9 January 1922, turned down) and no. 71464 (10 June 1922, approved on 30 June); call numbers 12592 and 13550.
8 Tralbaut 1948, pp. 35, 182, 183, contradicted himself about the location of Van Gogh's room, but finally came to the conclusion that it was impossible to say precisely where it was. That is incorrect. We know from the letters that his 'little room' [544] was above the home or shop of a paint merchant called Willem Hendricus Brandel. He also had 'a little cubby-hole' where he could work in bad weather [545]. The construction drawing shows that the only small space of that kind was on the second floor, so Van Gogh must have rented the front or back room on that floor. The latter seems the more likely, for the front room had windows and the back room did not, and the fact that Van Gogh took up a position on the staircase, of all places, in order to paint views (see below) seems to suggest that he did not have that opportunity in his own room. The logical conclusion is that he rented the windowless room.
9 Tralbaut 1948, p. 35, had already suggested this as a possibility but did not pursue it. He also studied the construction drawings (pp. 35, 182, 183), but did not draw any conclusions from them.
10 The photograph was taken from the half-landing on the staircase built between the second floor and the attic in 1922.



49 Houses seen from the back



49a Gustave Doré, *Over London – by rail*, in Gustave Doré and [William] Blanchard Jerrold, *London – a pilgrimage*, London 1872, facing p. 120.

Houses seen from the back was painted on canvas prepared with a light pink ground that was cut from the same roll as that used for *Portrait of an old man* (cat. 45) (Table 3.4, no. 20). However, unlike that work, in which he covered the pink with a streaky grey layer, he now incorporated the colour of the ground in the picture surface. The houses and small back yards are loosely laid in with greys and browns mixed on the palette, with small areas of the ground being left visible by the chimney on the right and as light-coloured accents along the contours (fig. 49e).

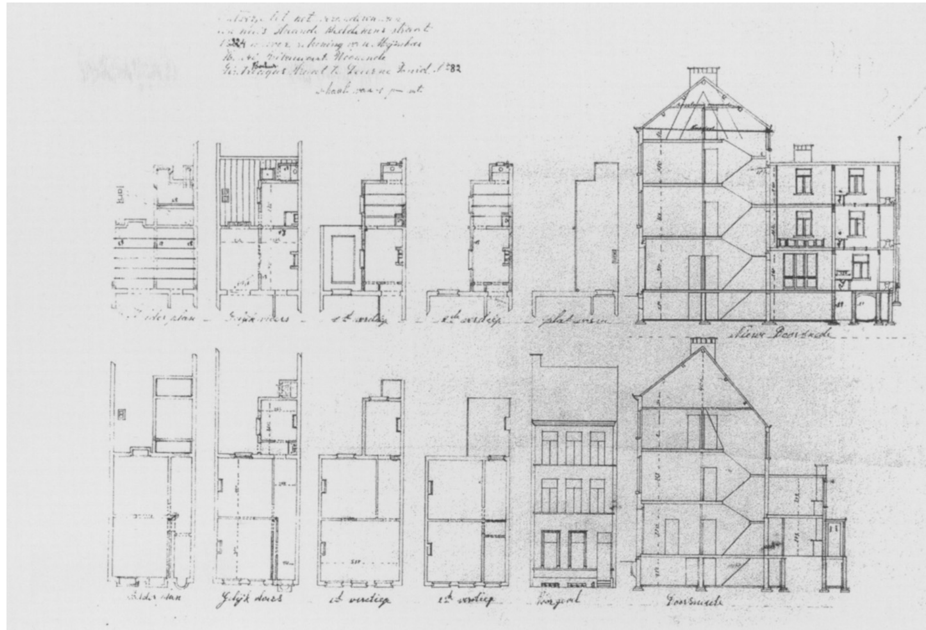
The technique is a little more complex in the sky and the snow-covered roof. Here Van Gogh applied a coloured underpaint that contributes to the final effect. In order to achieve the effect of a glowing sky he reinforced the pale pink of the ground with an even, warm pink around the silhouettes of the completed roofs and chimneys. At one point the runny paint dribbled over a roof by accident (fig. 49f). He prepared the snow-covered roof with greyish pink to liver-coloured strokes that show through the lighter paint applied on top. This optical layering resulted in a cool tone, the effect of which was further reinforced by the blue pigment incorporated in the coolest brushstrokes of the snow.[11]

Van Gogh used light yellow, pink and green tints to get the effect of the glowing sky, using more 'dry' paint than he did in the rest of the picture. He had this warm light reflect off the roof in the foreground by adding light yellow strokes. Analysis of all these colours has shown that he used bright cadmium yellow and chrome orange instead of his favourite yellow pigment from the Nuenen period: the slightly duller Naples yellow, which he still used in Antwerp for his darker canvases (cats. 45, 50).[12] He was full of praise for the expensive cadmium yellow, which was one of the new pigments he had just bought.[13] The last strokes in the sky and the roof dried more quickly than the layer underneath, resulting in disfiguring drying cracks.[14]

The details were added with dark paint applied with delicate, pointed brushes. Van Gogh used them to apply linear accents along the roof tiles, bricks and windows. This uncommonly delicate drawing technique has been associated with the influence of Japanese graphic art,[15] but in fact it was probably just the result of the 'two new types of drawing brush' he had bought at the beginning of December, which enabled him to work 'more accurately' [547].[16]

11 This is due to the 'turbid medium effect', the name given to the phenomenon whereby a light colour applied over a dark one appears cool as a result of the scattering of blue light and the absorption of red and yellow.
12 Van Gogh mixed chrome orange with zinc white for the warm pink underlayer of the sky. The yellow accents on top consist of cadmium yellow with lead white, and the green accents of a little cadmium yellow with a lot of viridian green.
13 See letter 550.
14 A sample taken from a pale yellow brushstroke in the sky showed that the yellow paint contains the quick-drying lead white and not the slower-drying zinc white that Van Gogh used for the pink underlayer. This could explain the shrinkage cracks.
15 See De la Faille 1970, no. 260, and Tralbaut 1948, pp. 184, 185.
16 Van Gogh probably also used brushes of this kind for the delicate detailing of individual hairs in eyebrows and eyelashes in *Portrait of an old man* (cat. 45) and *Head of a woman with a scarlet bow in her hair* (fig. 46a).





49b Photograph of the back of no. 224, Lange Beeldekensstraat taken from the edge of the extension built in 1922. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

49c Detail of *Ontwerp tot het veranderen van een huis staande Beeldekens straat 224*, 1922. Antwerpen, Stadsarchief. The lower part of this drawing shows the situation before the rebuilding work done in 1922. On the left is a floor plan of the second floor, where Van Gogh had a room, probably at the back. On the right is a cross-section of the house, showing that there was a window in the staircase between the first and second floors with a view of the extension.



49d Composite photograph taken from no. 224, Lange Beeldekensstraat, 17 July 2002.

There is a random pattern of nail-holes along the edges and in the corners on the front of the painting. Some of them seem to have been made when the paint was still fairly fresh, with the result that it has been pushed aside around the hole rather than cracking. It is likely that when Van Gogh had finished the picture he took it off the stretcher or strainer and nailed it flat against the wall in order to inspect it properly and let it dry.[17]

Since 1939 this painting has been identified with the one Van Gogh mentions in his letter of around 6-7 December 1885: a study 'of the backs of old houses – seen out of my window' [546], but it turns out that that is not the case.[18] Snow has fallen in *Houses seen from the back*, and the first snowfall in Antwerp that winter was not until 9 December, a couple of days after that letter.[19] Snow fell again on 11 Decem-

17 Van Gogh did this on other occasions as well (see letter 648, for example), and also pinned up Japanese prints on the wall of his Antwerp studio (see letter 545).
18 In Amsterdam 1905, no. 46, the work was described as a view in Paris, and that was adopted in De la Faille 1928, no. 260. It was only in the second edition of his oeuvre catalogue that De la Faille associated it with the passage in letter 546 (De la Faille 1939, p. 203, no. 260). He had associated F 204 JH 190 with that passage in his first oeuvre catalogue but failed to correct that in the second edition, with the result that two different works were linked to the same quotation.
19 There was no less than 10 cm of snow, according to the weather reports of the Royal Belgian Meteorological Institute in Brussels, from which the other information about the weather has also been taken. The daytime temperature in the next few days was just above 0°C, but it froze at night until the night of 13-14 December.



49e Detail of exposed ground in the chimney cowl.



49f Detail of the pink underlayer that has run over the roof from the sky.

ber and had not yet melted three days later, as we know from the letter he wrote that day: 'and first thing this morning the city was beautiful in the snow' [547]. The thaw then set in. Since Van Gogh was so enthusiastic about the snow on 14 December it is not impossible that he painted this work that day, but there is no evidence that he did. Strictly speaking, the view could also have been painted between 9 and 14 December, or at a later date in December, January or February, when Antwerp was again covered in white.

In other words 'the backs of old houses – seen out of my window' was another work altogether, but we know that it was painted from exactly the same spot on the staircase [546] because Van Gogh took it to Paris, where he overpainted it at the beginning of 1887 with a view of the terrace of the Blute-fin windmill.[20] The underlying scene is clearly visible in the infra-red reflectogram (fig. 49g), which shows the same view as in the surviving painting (cat. 49).[21] That the two paintings were made soon after each other is supported by examination of the canvases, which were cut side-by-side from the same roll (see cat. 45). The focus in the first version is perhaps a little tighter, for the chimney on top of the extension on the right is missing. However, the painting in the Van Gogh Museum should not be regarded as a second, improved version of the same subject. The view had been changed by the weather, which was the reason to paint it again.

20 F 272 JH 1183; for the redating of the work to 1887 see p. 43.
21 The infrared reflectogram of the painting, is reproduced in Chicago/Amsterdam 2001-02, p. 60, fig. 13. Since it is the view from the staircase, Van Gogh's words 'seen out of my window' allude to the house he was living in, not the room.



49g Infra-red reflectogram of *Terrace and observation deck at the Moulin de Blute-fin, Montmartre* (F 272 JH 1183), 1887. Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago.

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
De la Faille 1928, vol. I, p. 76, vol. 2, pl. LXXI; De la Faille 1939, p. 203, no. 260; Tralbaut 1948, pp. 110, 181-91, 283, no. 1; Amsterdam 1958, no. 163, 164 + ill.; Tralbaut 1958, pp. 35, 36, 43; Tralbaut 1963 II, pp. 83-85, 88; De la Faille 1970, pp. 109, 132, 621; Hulsker 1977, pp. 213, 214; Hulsker 1980, pp. 213, 214; Amsterdam 1987, p. 322, no. 1.96; Kyoto/Tokyo 1992, pp. 58, 59, no. 1; Hulsker 1996, p. 214; Vienna 1996, pp. 222, 224, no. 89; Tokyo 1997, pp. 48, 49, 134, no. 4; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 46, 65, 72, note 20, p. 73, note 53; Seoul 2007-08, p. 244; Letters 2009, letter 546, note 1.

EXHIBITIONS
1929 Utrecht, no. 20? [not for sale]; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1947 Groningen, no. 20; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 31; 1949 Bolsward, no cat. known; 1951 Lyon & Grenoble, no. 12; 1951 Saint-Rémy, no. 12; 1953 The Hague, no. 45; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 50; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 54; 1954 Zürich, no. 12; 1954-55 Bern, no. 13; 1955 Antwerp, no. 115; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 55; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 9; 1956 Leeuwarden, no. 10; 1957 Breda, no. 34; 1957 Marseille, no. 17; 1957-58 Leiden & Schiedam, no. 7; 1958 Deventer, no. 6; 1958 Mons, no. 8; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 12; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 9; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 12; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 12; 1963 Humlebæk, no. 9; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 9; 1965 Charleroi & Ghent, no. 6; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 10; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 15; 1968-69 London, no. 54; 1969-70 Los Angeles, Saint Louis & Philadelphia, no. 9; 1970-71 Baltimore, San Francisco & New York, no. 9; 1971-72 Paris, no. 14; 1980 Mons, no. 19; 1992 Kyoto & Tokyo, no. 1; 1996 Vienna, no. 89; 1997 Tokyo, no. 4; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2007-08 Seoul, unnumbered.

50
Head of a skeleton with a burning cigarette

Antwerp, between 18 January and the beginning of February 1886
Oil on canvas
32.2 x 24.6 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 83 V/1962
F 212 JH 999

Jo van Gogh-Bonger, Theo's widow, called this painting 'Skull with cigarette' in 1910, and De la Faille followed that in his oeuvre catalogue of 1928.[1] That title then became the standard one, but strictly speaking it is incorrect,[2] because it is not just a skull but a skeleton, of which Van Gogh only depicted the skull and thoracic bones. There is a burning cigarette clamped between the teeth, with light blue smoke rising from both ends (fig. 50a).

Head of a skeleton with a burning cigarette was painted on a standard size of canvas, which Van Gogh began using in Antwerp.[3] The weave and ground are very close to those of the *Portrait of an old woman* (cat. 46), which was also painted in Antwerp, but that is not on a standard size canvas (Table 3.4, nos. 17, 16). The painting was finished in a single session, with the smoke from the cigarette being one of the last additions. The initial layout consisted of a casual, local covering of the canvas with ochre, as can still be seen with the naked eye in the lower part of the skeleton. Van Gogh then began on the subject, painting the bones and skull with a variation of smooth browns and muted yellows, and giving the background an opaque, dark colour.[4] He applied a dark blue paint around and partly over the skull, placing the dark, indefinable background colour over that. The paint layer in the thin passages has become a little worn through overcleaning, as can be seen near the eye sockets and in the background at top right.



50a Detail of cat. 50.

The complex anatomy of the skeleton is well observed and convincingly rendered. It is what is known as a ligament skeleton with the cartilages conserved, making it unnecessary to insert artificial joints.[5] Apart from being a possible exercise in depicting a skeleton, the work amounts to nothing more than a well-painted joke. Skeletons do not generally smoke cigarettes, but the painting suggests that this one is puffing away peacefully at one it has just lit.

In 1928 De la Faille dated this work to Van Gogh's Antwerp period, and that has been accepted by almost everyone.[6] Welsh-Ovcharov, in 1976, was alone in suggesting that it is from the Paris period, citing Van Gogh's studies of skulls as supporting evidence (cats. 99, 100).[7] However, the style of those works has little in common with this picture, whereas it does display many similarities to *Portrait of an old man* (cat. 45). Both works have an opaque, almost entirely plain background with an equally sharp distinction between background and head. In addition, the modelling with broad brushstrokes and the delightfully nonchalant impasto in the skull is almost identical to that in two other Antwerp canvases: *Portrait of a prostitute* (cat. 47) and *Head of a prostitute* (cat. 48). The rather arbitrary placement of the light passages in the neck and bones is also very reminiscent of the method followed in those studies, which was borrowed from Rubens (see cats. 47, 48).

It is unlikely that Van Gogh had this skeleton standing in his room, so the study must have been made at the Antwerp academy, where they had specimens for

1 'Schedel m[et] cigaret'. Jo van Gogh-Bonger used this title in two lists of works of art for the exhibition which Paul Cassirer organised in Berlin in 1910 (b 4064 [no. 8] and b 2184 [no. 8]). That title was adopted in the exhibition catalogue.
2 As was pointed out by Frank Gribling during preparations in 1967 for De la Faille 1970.
3 On Van Gogh's use of standard sizes see p. 92.
4 The background colour is difficult to describe due to its degraded (blanched) appearance, as well as to the remnants of an old, discoloured layer of varnish and overpaint.
5 Kind communication of Andries van Dam, curator of the Anatomisch Museum, Leiden.
6 Vanbeselaere did not include it in his 1937 oeuvre catalogue of Van Gogh's Antwerp period (Vanbeselaere 1937 I).
7 Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 229. Tralbaut 1948, p. 224, thought that Van Gogh took the skeleton with him to Paris, where in his view the skull was depicted twice (ibid., pp. 338, 339). See also cats. 99, 100 below.



50 Head of a skeleton with a burning cigarette



50b *Venus in a top hat* (F 1363fr JH 1051), 1886.
Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

studying human anatomy. Van Gogh attended the painting course from 18 January 1886 until the beginning of February, so that would be the period in which this painting was made.[8] It would not have been an official exercise, because painting a skeleton was not part of the official curriculum, but he could have done it in his free time, perhaps between the daytime painting course and the evening drawing lessons, for which he had also enrolled.

The palette of *Head of a skeleton with a burning cigarette* is not identical to that of Van Gogh's earlier, experimental portraits of women (cats. 46-48). He reverted instead to his conventional Dutch palette, which he only employed at the very beginning of his time in Antwerp (see cat. 45), with familiar earth-coloured pigments like red ochre and an organic brown, and Naples yellow and French ultramarine, and avoided the brighter kinds he had recently discovered, like cadmium yellow, cobalt blue, vermilion and bright red lake (see cats. 46-49 for the latter pigments).[9] This seems to have been due to the traditional instruction being given at the academy, which involved the students using an earth-coloured palette.

Many people have been surprised by the sense of humour displayed in this scene. It was not something that was associated with Van Gogh, so much so that Bremmer wrote in 1930, albeit entirely rhetorically, that it would be a good idea if there was 'a careful check to see whether [...] the work is by his hand'.[10] Tralbaut said that before this painting was made 'neither humour nor irony, sarcasm nor cynicism of such a kind ever sought an outlet in Vincent's artistic aspirations'. He called the study a product of 'lugubrious scepticism or philosophising facetiousness',[11] which made the innocent humour a great deal more serious than it was. Stellingwerff did the same, saying that the painting represented Van Gogh's final rejection of the Christian view of the afterlife: 'Death is the end, there is then nothing more of the person who once lived'.[12]

Such ponderous thoughts should not be sought behind *Head of a skeleton with a burning cigarette*. The humour is on a par with that of the drawing *Venus in a top hat* from the Paris period (fig. 50b), in which he mocked the teaching aids in Cormon's studio in a similar way.[13] It is a well-painted in-joke, and like the drawing is the kind of traditional studio or academy humour that is as old as those institutions themselves. It was and is born of a desire to irritate or poke fun at the establishment, and that was nothing new to Van Gogh.[14]

8 See cat. 46 for this and the following information.
9 On Van Gogh's palette in Antwerp see p. 92.
10 Bremmer 1930, vol. 4, p. 27: '[...] wel goed [zou] willen nagaan, of het [...] werk van zijn hand is'.
11 Tralbaut 1948, p. 226: '[...] nooit humor of ironie, sarcasme of cynisme van zulk allooi in Vincent's artistieke aspiraties naar een uitweg zochten. [...] luguber scepticisme of filosofeerenden spotlust'.
12 Stellingwerff 1959, p. 92: 'De dood is het einde, dan is er geen sprake meer van de mens die eens leefde'.
13 See Drawings 3, cat. 267.
14 Just before he left Nuenen he handed out condoms to the peasant boys of the village in order to get his own back on the local parish priest, who had been making life difficult for him. See the letter from Anton Kerssemakers to Albert Plasschaert of 27 August 1912 (b 3038), quoted in Luijten 2007, pp. 27, 28.

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 63, vol. 2, pl. LVI; Bremmer 1930, vol. 4, pp. 27, 28, no. 27; De la Faille 1939, p. 178, no. 221; Tralbaut 1948, pp. 223-29, 284, no. 35; Tralbaut 1958, pp. 51, 52; Stellingwerff 1959, pp. 92, 93; London 1968-69, p. 55, no. 58; De la Faille 1970, pp. 108, 619; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 229; Hulsker 1977, p. 218; Hulsker 1980, p. 218; Amsterdam 1987, p. 323, no. 1.102; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 84; Kyoto/Tokyo 1992, pp. 60, 61, no. 2; Tokyo 1994, pp. 36, 37, 114, no. 2; Hulsker 1996, pp. 217, 218; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 46, 53, 65, 73, note 24; Coyle 2007, pp. 256, 257.

EXHIBITIONS
1910 Berlin, no. 3 [DM. 2,500]; 1911 Frankfurt am Main, no cat. known; 1929 Utrecht, no. 8 [not for sale]; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 39; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 53; 1955 Antwerp, no. 125; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 64; 1957 Bordeaux, no. 278; 1965 Marseille, no. 1; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 17; 1968-69 London, no. 58; 1971-72 Paris, no. 13; 1980 Mons, no. 26; 1992 Kyoto & Tokyo, no. 2; 1994 Tokyo, no. 2; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 14; 2003 Amsterdam II, unnumbered.

51
Nude girl, seated

Paris, April-early June 1886
Oil on canvas
27.1 x 23.5 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 90 V/1962
F 215 JH 1045

Underlying image: flower still life (fig. 51f)
After March 1886

Van Gogh left Antwerp for Paris around 1 March 1886 and moved in with his brother Theo, who was living at 25 rue Laval (now rue Victor Massé). He began exploring the city, making small drawings of what he saw,[1] and took drawing and painting lessons until the beginning of June in the studio of the history painter Fernand Cormon in boulevard de Clichy.[2] Cormon's students made drawings of plaster copies of classical sculptures and of the nude model, the latter being the only subject in the painting lessons.[3]

Several of the drawings that Van Gogh made at the studio have survived, but this picture of a young girl is the only painted study.[4] Three of his drawings are of the same girl (figs. 51a-c), and since it is known for certain that they were made in Cormon's studio this painting must have been as well.[5] Its style is lively and direct, and there is nothing to suggest that it was painted after an unknown, lost drawing. It is not clear whether it was standard studio practice to make drawings and paintings of very young nudes, but it seems to have been in Cormon's. Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, at any rate, made a study of a naked young girl in his early years at the studio (fig. 51d), and there is also a drawing of one by Cormon himself (fig. 51e).[6]

The model painted by Van Gogh has bright red cheeks and dark blonde hair, and is seated on a low stool draped with a white cloth. The light is falling on her body from the front, casting a sharp shadow on the wall behind her. She is seen obliquely from the side, as she is in two of the three drawn studies (figs. 51a-b), which mainly focus on the body – the face is only sketchily indicated.

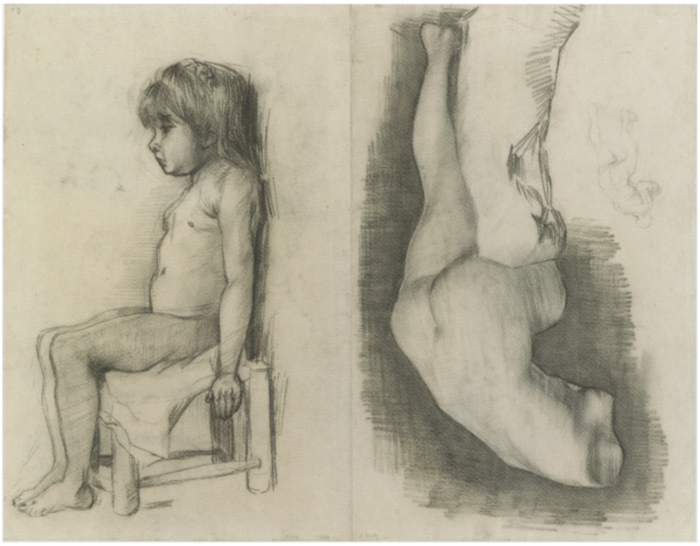
The four works would have been made during a single sitting, with the drawings probably preceding the painting. The modelling of the body in this oil sketch is very similar to that in the most detailed sheet, which shows the girl in an almost identical pose (fig. 51a). The only difference is that Van Gogh took up a position a little further to the right, presenting the body *en trois quarts*. However, as in the drawing, the girl's head is seen directly from the side. Since she was in reality looking straight ahead of her, as we can deduce from the drawings, this modification would have been done for the sake of convenience. Van Gogh was interested in depicting her body and did not want to lose any time on an accurate but time-consuming rendering of the head *en trois quarts*, the perspective of which was so much more difficult to capture.

Nude girl, seated was painted over another scene.[7] Although the X-radiograph is not equally legible everywhere, that first work was clearly a flower still life painted with the canvas rotated 90° to the right relative to the present scene (fig. 51f). On the right is a tall vase with flowers of a round shape that look like lilacs or hyacinths at first sight. Examination under the microscope reveals local traces of pink and blue on the painted surface at these points. Foliage is recognisable to the right and left of centre above the flowers. The rest of the scene is difficult to make out, but the ridged shape at bottom left could be a basket or a plate.[8]

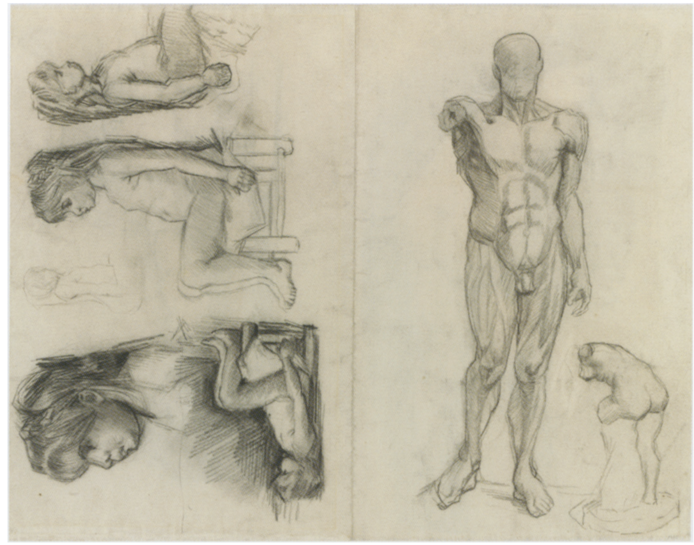
1 A few drawings of parks and streets in a sketchbook can definitely be dated to the early spring (Drawings 3, pp. 90-93, 98-103, cats. 228, 229, 232-35). On the sketchbook, only five pages of which survive, see ibid., p. 90, note 2.
2 Van Tilborgh 2007, and see also pp. 67-68.
3 Paintings were usually made after the draped model in other studios, but not in Cormon's (Drawings 3, pp. 120, 121).
4 There are two other exercises after the nude model which one suspects were made in Cormon's studio. Van Gogh overpainted them with self-portraits in the autumn and winter of 1886 (cats. 75, 76).
5 Drawings 3, pp. 123-27, cats. 245-47.
6 See also Drawings 3, p. 121.
7 Van Heugten 1995, p. 80, no. 15.
8 So as far as the composition is concerned this work differs from Van Gogh's symmetrical flower still lifes of the summer and autumn of 1886 (see cats. 67-71) with which it was compared in Drawings 3, p. 22. Hyacinths flower indoors from around January, and out of doors from April to mid-May. Lilacs flower later, from the end of April to the beginning of June.



51 Nude girl, seated



51a *Seated girl and Venus* (F 1366v JH 1044), 1886. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



51b *Studies of a seated girl, L'Ecorché and Venus* (F 1366r JH 1039), 1886. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



51c *Seated girl seen from the front* (F 1367 JH 1043), 1886. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



51d Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Study of a nude girl, standing*, c. 1883. Albi, Musée Toulouse-Lautrec.

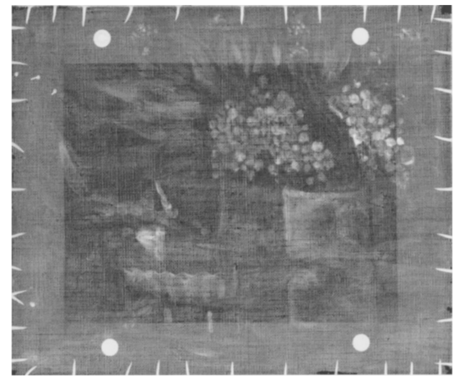


51e Fernand Cormon, *Study of a nude girl*, c. 1884. New York, private collection. On loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

That still life must have been one of the very first paintings that Van Gogh made in Paris. The open weave of the canvas with thin threads is typical of the cheap type of support he used at the time, and the single layer of lead white priming is also standard, although not exclusive to that period (Table 3.5, no. 33).[9] The bright colours also show that the hidden scene was painted in Paris and not in Antwerp, and more specifically between the beginning of March 1886, when he arrived in the French capital, and his departure from Cormon's studio in early June of that year, when the still life would have been replaced by the nude girl.[10]

Van Gogh did not scrape the still life off the canvas but simply painted over it, without even applying an intermediate layer. The underlying scene is still very perceptible due to the marked impasto, particularly at top left, where the thick, round strokes for the flowers are responsible for the irregular structure of the present background. A small piece of bright green from the foliage was left uncovered along the bottom of the thigh, where it contributes to the flesh tones.

The figure is quite thinly painted, in a departure from the portraits of the Antwerp period (cf. cats. 46-48, 50) that shows Van Gogh conforming to the academic technique taught in Cormon's studio. That is also reflected in the structure of the flesh tones. He first applied a traditional greyish green base tone, which is particularly noticeable by the left leg, before following the old practice of modelling with more textured pink tints towards the lights and then adding the shadows. What is also academic is the technique of brushing the tints into each other with a soft brush, as can be seen in the girl's left calf. Van Gogh's method for the hands, feet and above all head was very different, with the colours being applied with a few broad strokes, almost as if they were plane surfaces. He was equally unconventional in using a stiff brush for the illuminated parts of the torso. The contrast between green and pink is predominant. It is a soft, complementary colour contrast that is also found in the portraits that he painted at about the same time (cats. 52-54) and in *Path in Montmartre* of May 1886 (cat. 55).



51f X-radiograph of cat. 51.

9 On this see pp. 106-07.
10 *Nude girl, seated* has always been dated to Paris, apart from in London etc. 1947-48, p. 27, no. 12, echoed in Bergen/Oslo 1948, no. 9, where it was placed in Antwerp. Cooper immediately rejected that, as noted in Sutton 1948, p. 3. It was then dated to the spring or autumn of 1886, depending on authors' views about the date of Van Gogh's period of study in Cormon's studio (Hulsker 1977, p. 229; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 235). Some even placed it in 1887 (Drawings 3, pp. 22, 188).

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 64, vol. 2, pl. LVIII; De la Faille 1939, p. 195, no. 247; London etc. 1947-48, p. 27, no. 12; Sutton 1948; De la Faille 1970, pp. 110, 113, 619; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 134, 235; Hulsker 1977, pp. 228, 229; Hulsker 1980, pp. 228, 229; Amsterdam 1987, p. 325, no. 1.110; Van Heugten 1995, p. 80, no. 15; Hulsker 1996, pp. 228-30; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 67, 73, note 54; Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 306.

Exhibitions
1905 Amsterdam 1, no. 52 [Dfl. 375]; 1928 Berlin, no. 10; 1928 Vienna, no. 9; 1928 Frankfurt am Main, no. 8; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 20; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1946-47 Liège, Brussels & Mons, no. 39; 1947 Paris, no. 39; 1947 Geneva, no. 40; 1947-48 London, Birmingham & Glasgow, no. 12; 1948 Bergen & Oslo, no. 9; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 40; 1953 The Hague, no. 65; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 71; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 51; 1955 Antwerp, no. 191.

52
Paris, March-June 1886
Oil on canvas
27.2 x 19.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 159 V/1962
F 208 JH 1195

53
Paris, March-June 1886
Oil on canvas
27.0 x 18.9 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 91 V/1962
F 215c JH –

54
Paris, March-June 1886
Oil on canvas
32.3 x 22.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 74 V/1962
F 215d JH –

52 Self-portrait

53 Portrait of a woman

54 Portrait of a woman

Although *Nude girl, seated* (cat. 51) is the only painting to have survived from Van Gogh's time as a student in Cormon's studio, it is not the only work in the Paris oeuvre to have been executed in an academic technique. The Van Gogh Museum has a *Self-portrait* (cat. 52) and two portraits (cats. 53, 54) in an almost identical style. Like *Nude girl, seated*, they are sketchily painted and look very much like conventional *ébauches*.[1] The paint is thin and the palette consists of a minimum of earth colours dominated by reddish brown, brown and green.

The self-portrait was the only one of the three paintings to be included in De la Faille's oeuvre catalogue of 1928. The two female portraits were only discovered later in the family collection, and were placed in the Antwerp period.[2] In 1953, however, De la Faille said that that was impossible,[3] and sought the support of M.E. Tralbaut, the author of *Vincent van Gogh in zijn Antwerpsche periode* (Vincent van Gogh in his Antwerp period) of 1948, who said that he agreed with him.[4] De la Faille then dated both works to the Paris period in the manuscript for the revised edition of his catalogue, and it was as such that they were first published in 1970.

However, the editors of that edition raised doubts about the attribution to Van Gogh. They felt that the portrait of the woman with the gloves (cat. 54) was by another Dutch artist, and hesitated to accept the other painting (cat. 53) as autograph.[5] These complete and partial rejections were based on the assumption that the subject of the second picture might possibly be Jo van Gogh-Bonger and that the former study was definitely of her. However, Van Gogh did not meet his brother's wife until 1890, and if she is the sitter that would be totally at odds with De la Faille's attribution and dating.

1 For the *ébauche* see Boime 1971, pp. 36-41, and Murray 1991, pp. 59, 60.
2 This was done in the early 1950s, when the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam made the first full inventory of the collection given to it on loan by Vincent Willem van Gogh, Theo's son. Cat. 83 also belonged to this group of the then 'newly discovered' works. The dates given to the two women's portraits are recorded on their registration cards as 'verm.[oedelijk] antwerpen' ('prob.[ably] Antwerp').
3 See the letter from J.B. de la Faille to M.E. Tralbaut, 29 June 1953.
4 'I have of course known them for many years. [...] That I decidedly omitted them from my book on the Antwerp period is simply due to the fact that not one of them permits such a dating on the evidence of the style' ('Vanzelfsprekend ken ik ze sinds vele jaren. [...] Dat ik ze beslist heb van kant gelaten voor mijn boek over de Antwerpse tijd, ligt eenvoudig aan het feit, dat geen ervan stijlkritisch een dergelijke situering toelaat'). Letter from M.E. Tralbaut to J.B. de la Faille, 26 June 1953.
5 De la Faille 1970, pp. 110, 113. This subtlety in the attributions of the two portraits was demolished on p. 597 of the same book, where they are both listed under the heading 'Works accepted by Faille but rejected by the editors'.



52 Self-portrait



53 Portrait of a woman



54 Portrait of a woman



52a Photograph of Jo Bonger taken by the firm of Woodbury & Page, 1889. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

These doubts, without the reservation about the woman in the hat (cat. 53), were echoed by Welsh-Ovcharov in 1976, who even believed on the evidence of a contemporary source that one of the two portraits might have to be attributed to Van Gogh's friend Emile Bernard.[6] Although it turned out that this was based on an unfortunate misunderstanding, the rejections were now widely accepted.[7] Hulsker omitted both paintings from his oeuvre catalogue without further comment, and the Van Gogh Museum collection catalogue of 1987 consigned them to the rejected works.[8]

But was this justified? The view of the editors of the 1970 edition of De la Faille that the sitter in both portraits was Theo's wife has proved to be untenable. Jo's face was quite round and did not have a pronounced jawline, as photographs show (fig. 52a). Only the sitter in the portrait of the woman with the gloves (cat. 54) has a comparable full face, but unlike Jo she does have visible cheekbones. Portrait photographs of Jo also show that her eyebrows were fairly straight and thick, and that does not match the downturned eyebrows of either woman in the paintings.[9] Jo's son, Vincent Willem van Gogh, also dismissed the idea that they are of his mother,[10] although he did agree with the suggestion that the portrait of the woman with the gloves might not be autograph.[11]

The distrust of both works seems to have been prompted mainly by the fact that such small, fairly academic portraits of women are an exception in Van Gogh's oeuvre. That is perfectly true, but it is no reason to reject them. A similarly academic style and technique is evident not only in *Nude girl, seated* (cat. 51) but also in the self-portrait discussed here (cat. 52), the authenticity of which has never been doubted. There have only been differences of opinion about its date. De la Faille ranked it among the Antwerp oeuvre in 1928,[12] and everyone accepted that for a long time.[13] However, De la Faille later changed his mind, and in the manuscript mentioned above he shifted it to Paris without giving any reasons, and no one called that new date into question after the revised edition of his catalogue was published in 1970.[14]

There can be no doubt that the painting is of Van Gogh, for he did indeed have green eyes and a fairly red beard that contrasted with the dark blond hair on his head, which he himself described as 'ash-coloured' [626]. His hair is slightly curly and the hairline is receding a little, as in the other self-portraits from around the same time (cats. 75-77). He has not portrayed himself as an artist but as a respectable, simply dressed member of society. His clothing consists of a coat with lapels, a white collar above a high-necked waistcoat, and a sketchily indicated blue tie.

All three canvases are unlined and are on original strainers of a standard size (figs. 52b-d). For his self-portrait (cat. 52) he used the standard *paysage* 3 size, which is confirmed by the stamp with that number on the strainer (fig. 52b). The sup-

6 Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 236.
7 Welsh-Ovcharov's misunderstanding was based on Tralbaut 1963 I, p. 18, who had cited a letter of 1890 from Jo's sister-in-law, Annie Bonger-van der Linden, to her parents-in-law (b 1865) in which she mentioned a portrait that Bernard had recently painted of her. Welsh-Ovcharov thought that the letter was written by Jo, and thus concluded that there was a portrait of Theo's wife by Bernard.
8 Amsterdam 1987, p. 35. Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, agreed.
9 They are also wearing earrings, and there is no evidence that Jo ever did. In fact, all the known photographs and portraits of her testify to the opposite.
10 'This is incorrect. [...] I have known both portraits all my life, and no one ever remarked that they were supposed to be of my mother' ('Dit is onjuist [...] Beide portretten heb ik mijn gehele leven gekend, en niemand heeft ooit de opmerking gemaakt dat zij mijn moeder zouden voorstellen'), in 'Notitie naar aanleiding van De la Faille's oeuvrecatalogus', 9 March 1971.
11 Ibid.; however, he expressed no opinion on the authenticity of the other work.
12 He associated it with Van Gogh's 'Man with a pipe' ('Man met pijp'), which was included as cat. no. 69 in the 1905 Amsterdam exhibition. That identification is incorrect. The work on display was F 534 JH 1651, which was sold in 1906 through the Berlin art dealer Paul Cassirer to the 'prince de Wagram' (the pseudonym of Louis-Alexandre Berthier), as shown by an exhibition catalogue annotated by Jo that year (b 2178). See also Stolwijk/Veenenbos 2002, pp. 51, 147 and 177 (sales 16/4 and 19/18).
13 His opinion was shared by Tralbaut 1948, Bromig-Kolleritz 1954 and Erpel 1964.
14 Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, Hulsker 1977, and Amsterdam 1987.



52b Reverse of cat. 52.



52c Reverse of cat. 53.



52d Reverse of cat. 54.

plier's stamp is on the back of the portrait of the woman with the gloves (cat. 54; fig. 52d, and p. 95, fig. 4). It was the Paris firm of Rey & Perrod with the address of their branch at 51 rue de la Rochefoucauld.[15]

The types of canvas differ, as do the primings, apart from the fact that they are all white. The portraits of the women have a single-layer ground consisting mainly of lead white, while that of the self-portrait consists of two layers of differing composition (see Table 3.5, nos. 49, 56, and Table 3.3, no. 12, respectively). One striking feature is that details of the construction of the strainers are almost identical (nails, corner joints, type of wood and bevelling), which could indicate that they came from the same manufacturer. It is also worth mentioning that there are fingerprints in a dark paint on the strainer of the self-portrait. The colour is the same as that of the background of the painting, so it would be the paint used in the picture.

There are minor differences in structure and technique between the paintings. The self-portrait and the painting of the woman in the hat (cats. 52, 53) are not underdrawn, unlike the portrait of the woman without a hat (cat. 54), in which the outlines of the gloves were probably first defined with graphite. The backgrounds are almost the same, differing only slightly in colour and execution. That of the self-portrait (cat. 52) is a semi-transparent dark brown, while that of the portrait of the woman in the hat (cat. 53) is a slightly more opaque reddish brown. These two variants are combined, as it were, in the portrait of the woman with the gloves (cat. 54), which has a more opaque reddish brown tint over a transparent brown layer.

In order to increase the sense of space around the head in the self-portrait, Van Gogh rubbed off some of the background paint while it was still wet. This exposed the light ground, particularly where the threads of the canvas cross, imparting a lively structure to the background. The same effect was achieved in the portrait of the woman in the hat by thinning the paint layer by feathering it with a fairly broad hog-hair brush. Van Gogh adopted a third approach in the other woman's portrait by working with two colours in the background.

The technical structure of the faces in all three paintings, with their pronounced chiaroscuro, is fairly conventional. The shaded passages were first indicated with a transparent red-brown, which allowed the light ground to show through. The mid-

15 According to Constantin 2001, p. 66, the two firms joined forces in 1882 and remained active as a single entity until 1905; see Van Tilborgh/Hendriks 2010, p. 401, note 70.

tones and cooler shadows were then placed on top with a buttery grey-brown which was painted thinly and loosely. This left the red-brown underlayer visible, apart from by the illuminated shapes in the faces, which were worked up with opaque paint.

All three paintings were probably completed in a single session. Van Gogh worked wet-into-wet with rapid movements, alternating between the portraits and the background. Impasted brushstrokes were reserved for the occasional highlight on a cheek, collar or tip of a nose. The colour of the light ground contributes to the palette in all three cases, although it is more pronounced in the self-portrait and the portrait of the woman in the hat. In the other portrait (cat. 54) the artist made a correction at the very last minute by widening the woman's right shoulder a little and altering the chair, which later resulted in long, diagonal drying cracks at these points.

The complementary colour contrast between reddish and green tints is a key feature of all three portraits, although it is not very pronounced. Reddish tints were used for the warm shadows in the face of the self-portrait, with a green pigment in the cool passages. This subtle contrast is reinforced with brighter touches of colour, such as red and pink accents by the eyelids, ear and beard, and bright green by the eyes and lip. There is also red and green shading in the clothing of the figures. In the portrait of the woman in the hat, for instance, Van Gogh mixed the complementary colours together to make dark tones, and occasionally resorted to painting the green and the red on top of each other. However, the colour effect he was seeking is not always very recognisable today. In the case of the two women's portraits that is due to the severely yellowed varnish, although a darkening of the paint also plays a part. In the self-portrait, for example, the organic red in the clothing has turned brown and the green has become darker.

The details summed up above are no reason to reject the women's portraits as authentic works by Van Gogh. They are painted rather unconventionally by his standards, but as already noted, *Nude girl, seated* (cat. 51) and the self-portrait (cat. 52) do show that he applied an academic technique that was unusual for him. The obvious attempts to create a lively effect in the backgrounds fit in well with his method in the self-portrait and with the goal that he formulated in Antwerp of giving heads 'more room' [547]. The loose, rather impasted rendering of the gloves in the portrait of the seated woman, and of the hat in the other portrait, which were undoubtedly inspired by Frans Hals, are not that far removed from Van Gogh's usual manner (see cats. 47, 48). Technical examination has shown that the dark colours in the self-portrait and the two women's portraits are complex mixtures of exactly the same pigments, which include Naples yellow, umber, ochre and carbon black pigments, which recall Van Gogh's palette in Nuenen and Antwerp.

It is also telling that the three paintings have one feature in common with Van Gogh's other portraits, and that is the slightly incorrect rendering of faces *en trois quarts*. It was his unconscious custom to show more of the part of the face that was turned away than was strictly realistic (see cat. 46, for example). Taken together with the knowledge that the studies come from the family collection but display not the slightest affinity with the early, academic work of artist friends of Vincent's and Theo's, this seems sufficient to attribute them to Van Gogh despite their slightly

odd technique. If one looks at the question of their dating, there is also an additional argument.

The technical and stylistic resemblances show that the three portraits were painted around the same time, and given the similarity to *Nude girl, seated* (cat. 51) it is only logical to date them to the period March-June 1886. This was the time when Van Gogh was trying to master the academic technique in Cormon's studio, and he would undoubtedly have wanted to apply that manner to portraiture, the genre that he had set out to make his own in Antwerp.[16] He was now living with Theo in rue Laval in Paris, and the Rey & Perrod shop where he had bought the ready-prepared canvas for the portrait of the woman with the gloves (cat. 54) was just around the corner.[17] Before the brothers moved to rue Lepic in June 1886, on which see cat. 95, this was Van Gogh's nearest shop with artists' materials, and it is known that several other students of Cormon's – Russell, Toulouse-Lautrec and Anquetin – also bought their supplies there.[18]

It does not look as if the two women's portraits are of the same model. One has a frown line in her forehead and the other does not, and the size of their noses differs. They cannot be identified, nor can one say anything about their social status. They are wearing conventional middle-class attire, with just the hat in one of the portraits striking a frivolous or at least fashionable note. However, they could equally well be from the working class, but then dressed in their Sunday best.[19] One can only speculate as to the women who could have posed for Van Gogh in his first few months in Paris. It is unlikely that Theo would have permitted his brother to have models, paid or not, pose for him in the apartment, so they have to be sought in Theo's circle of acquaintances. The very first person one then thinks of is Theo's mistress, the mysterious S, whom he was to ditch in August of that year, and Lucie, their housekeeper, who was dismissed at the same time.[20]

16 As noted above, the students did not work from the draped model in Cormon's studio (Drawings 3, p. 121), so the paintings would have been made in Theo's apartment. According to Jo van Gogh-Bonger, Vincent did not use the rue Laval apartment as a studio, because it was too small (Letters 1958, vol. 1, p. XL), but it is clear from the dates when several paintings must have been made that he did work there, albeit very rarely (see pp. 39, 40). Space was limited, which may explain the unusually small size of these three portraits, which did away with the need for an easel. The other oil studies made in the apartment include the flower still life hidden behind cat. 51 and the portrait of a woman under F 273 JH 1116, which measures 46.5 x 38 cm (Kōdera 1993, pp. 36-38). The woman in the hat (cat. 53) bears some resemblance to the female model (without a hat) in a sketchbook sheet which is known to date from the first few months of Van Gogh's time in Paris (Van der Wolk 1987, p. 109, SB2, no. 41).
17 Their other shop was not far away at 64 rue Notre-Dame-de-Lorette; see Constantin 2001, p. 64.
18 On this see p. 94 note 12 and Van Tilborgh/Hendriks 2010, p. 401, note 70. It is known that Van Gogh also painted *The Moulin Le Blute-fin* (F – JH –) of roughly October 1886 on a matching type of ready-prepared canvas from this shop; see ibid.
19 E-mail from Frieda Sorber (Provinciaal Textielmuseum, Ranst), 5 June 2000.
20 Both are mentioned in letter 568 of around 18 August 1886, when Vincent urged Theo, who was in the Netherlands at the time, to break off his relationship with S.

Cat. 52

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 62, vol. 2, pl. LV; Vanbeselaere 1937 II, p. 542; De la Faille 1939, p. 180, no. 224; Tralbaut 1948, pp. 215-20, 283, no. 16; Bromig-Kolleritz 1954, pp. 33, 41, 42, 89, 90; Tralbaut 1958, pp. 48-50; Erpel 1964, p. 52, no. 2; De la Faille 1970, pp. 108, 180, 183, 619; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 123, note 38, 149, 224; Hulsker 1977, pp. 260, 262, 263; Hulsker 1980, pp. 260, 263; Amsterdam 1987, p. 324, no. 1.106; Hulsker 1996, pp. 260, 262, 263 [as 1196]; Dorn 2005, p. 21; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 51, 64.

Exhibitions
1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 36; 1950 Hilversum, no. 9; 1953 The Hague, no. 48; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 47; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 2; 1955 Antwerp, no. 120; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 59; 1960 London, no. 3; 1994 Amsterdam, no cat.; 1995 Hamburg, unnumbered; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.

Cat. 53

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Not in De la Faille 1928; not in De la Faille 1939; De la Faille 1970, pp. 110, 113, 597, 619; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 236; not in Hulsker 1977; not in Hulsker 1980; Amsterdam 1987, p. 365, no. 1.263; not in Hulsker 1989; Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424; not in Hulsker 1996; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 114, 116, 124, 129, 130; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 68.

Exhibition
1948-49 The Hague, no. 51.

Cat. 54

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Not in De la Faille 1928; not in De la Faille 1939; De la Faille 1970, pp. 113, 597, 619; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 236; not in Hulsker 1977; not in Hulsker 1980; Amsterdam 1987, p. 365, no. 1.264; not in Hulsker 1989; Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424; not in Hulsker 1996; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 45, 69.

Exhibition
1948-49 The Hague, no. 52.

55
Path in Montmartre

Paris, late April-early May 1886
Oil on *carton*
22.2 x 16.3 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 92 V/1962
F 232 JH 1113

Not long after arriving in Paris Van Gogh set about exploring his new surroundings by making drawings.[1] It was only later that he started recording the city in paintings, and one of his first efforts was this small study on *carton*.[2] In the centre is a path with some steps leading upwards with the figures of three women and a man. The sky on the right has a pink glow, so it looks as if the sun is about to set. It was not very late, because the lantern at the foot of the steps has not yet been lit.

There are gardens behind tall wooden fences on either side of the path, with an apple tree in blossom in the one on the left, and a wood of pine trees in the background. The painting has been dated to both the spring and summer of 1886, but the latter is ruled out by the flowering fruit tree. We know from contemporary weather reports that the first apple tree flowered in Paris on 23 April that year, and given its blossoming season of around two weeks this painting must have been made around the end of April or beginning of May 1886.[3]

It has always been assumed that these steps must have been somewhere in Montmartre,[4] and this is backed up by the fact that there are no buildings to be seen and that the lamppost is the kind that was found there (see Appendix 1, fig. 1). This may be one of the many small paths on the unoccupied north side of the Paris hill with its many garden allotments, some of which were fenced in, but the problem is that there was no pine wood there, as far as is known.[5] The spot must lie somewhere else, in other words, but it is not clear where. There are no indications that Van Gogh worked in a rural area other than Montmartre in the spring of 1886, so we have retained the old title, even if it is not possible to identify the exact spot.

The scene is painted on ready-primed *carton* – a cheap option for a *plein-air* study. The different format and ground preparation distinguish it from the *cartons* that Van Gogh used after the move to rue Lepic at the beginning of June 1886 (see cats. 56-63 and Table 2). The landscape was painted in a single session. There is a thin underpaint in muted colours which Van Gogh seems to have applied in even patches. For example, there is a dark liver colour in the path in the foreground, pink in the sky, and a layer of grey beneath the blue of the man's jacket. The scene was then worked up on top of this draft while it was still wet, as can be seen from the light green accents in the left foreground. The traces left by the individual bristles of the brush used for the green can clearly be seen in the liver-coloured underlayer. The figures and the smaller shapes, like the lamppost and tree trunks, were painted on top of the background. Van Gogh was not entirely accurate, for the paint of the underlayer by the flowering tree on the left and in the left foreground was scraped off at some stage.

Van Gogh often used dark greens and reds in his portrait studies from this period, and that colour contrast recurs in this small landscape, but now in the pastel tints of orange-pink and blue-green – for which the ready-made, soft greenish blue

1 See cat. 51, note 1.
2 See pp. 39, 40, for the other paintings he made this spring.
3 Relevés Météorologiques, Parc de Saint-Maur, April 1886, A. 18 Paris, Météo France.
4 De la Faille 1928.
5 With thanks to Gérard Jouhet and André Roussard.



55 Path in Montmartre



55a Photograph of the drawing room in Jo van Gogh-Bonger's apartment at Koninginneweg 77, Amsterdam, c. 1915. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

tint of cerulean blue came in useful for the sky. The contrast of green and orange-pink was used not only in various parts of the composition but also in the build-up of the layers. For example, there is a light green mixture containing cerulean blue on top of the pink underlayer in the sky, and on top of that Van Gogh added strokes of bright orange-pink.

This painting is not in Andries Bonger's inventory of Theo's collection, nor was it selected for exhibitions by Theo's widow.[6] She must have been fond of it, though, for it can be seen on the mantelpiece in a photograph of her apartment (fig. 55a). Despite its small size, her son V.W. van Gogh did not banish it to the reserves either, and at the end of 1930 it was hanging in the corridor of his house in Laren.[7]

6 For a long time it was thought that cat. 55 was the 'View in Montmartre' ('Gezicht op Montmartre') in the 1905 exhibition in Amsterdam, but the high asking price of 1,700 guilders rules that out. The work in the exhibition was actually cat. 115.

7 He spoke of 'the small painting from the corridor (Steps with figures, early Paris)' ('[...] het kleine schilderijtje uit de gang (Trap met figuren, begin Parijs)') (loose note, 18 October 1930).

Provenance

See Note to the reader

Exhibition

1998-99 Enschede, no cat.

Literature

De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 69, vol. 2, pl. LXIII; De la Faille 1939, p. 263, no. 356; De la Faille 1970, pp. 120, 121, 620; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 202, note 21, p. 231; Hulsker 1977, pp. 242, 243; Hulsker 1980, pp. 242, 243; Amsterdam 1987, p. 324, no. 1.108; Hulsker 1996, pp. 242, 243; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 45, 73, note 36; Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 70.

56
View from Vincent's studio

Paris, early June 1886
Oil on *carton*
33.0 x 41.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 95 V/1962
F 231 JH 1099

Van Gogh made five vistas looking out over the roofs of Paris in the summer of 1886. Two of them can be described as panoramas (cat. 66, fig. 66b), but the other three are not as ambitious (cat. 56, figs. 56d and 73d), being smaller and with less extensive views, from which we suspect that they preceded the others.

This one is the smallest of the group, and unlike the others it is not on canvas but on commercially prepared *carton*. It has always been roughly dated to the spring or early summer of 1886, but since there is a flowering elderberry in the foreground we can be a little more precise.[1] The records show that the first elderberry flowered in Paris on 19 May 1886, and its short flowering period of roughly three weeks means that this painting must have been made between then and the middle of June.[2]

However, that can be narrowed down even further on the evidence of the view. According to Jo van Gogh-Bonger in her biography of her brother-in-law, Theo and Vincent moved from the small apartment at 25 rue Laval to one at 54 rue Lepic in June 1886, and according to De la Faille in 1928 this view was painted from 'the studio window'. 'The view takes in the grey slate roofs and the blocks of houses on the terraced hill.'[3]

The view is from the back of the new apartment,[4] looking north-east. The row of houses to the left of centre stood on rue Durantin. The apartment block with the double chimney on the extreme left still stands today and can be seen from a modern photograph, as does the small narrow building to the right of it, although it is hidden by the leaves of a tree (fig. 56a). The view has changed dramatically on the right, where there is now an early 20th-century apartment complex. Assuming that Jo was not mistaken when she said that the brothers moved house in June 1886, this painting must have been made in the early weeks of that month.[5]

According to De la Faille, Van Gogh recorded the view from his studio, and that fits in with Jo's description of the apartment. She reported in 1914 that it consisted of 'three reasonably large rooms, a tiny study and a little kitchen. The living room was comfortable and cosy. [...] Next to that was Theo's bedroom. Vincent slept in the study, and behind that was the studio, an ordinary room with one not particularly large window'.[6] Since the windows at the front of the apartment were large, this implies that she was speaking of the back.

The study is painted on *carton* with a very pale grey ground. It belongs to a group of ten *carton* supports with two types of ground that were bought from the colourman Pignel-Dupont at 17 rue Lepic (see Table 2). The firm's sticker listing the price of 65 centimes is on the back of the *carton* (fig. 56b).

Van Gogh seems to have laid down the composition directly in paint, for no traces of an underdrawing have been found. It was, however, extensively underpainted in contrasting colours, predominantly pink, reddish, blue and green tints,

1 De la Faille 1970, p. 120, dated it to May-June 1886; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 231, proposed early June; Hulsker 1977, p. 241, was initially a little indecisive before settling for spring 1886 in his 1996 edition (p. 238). That was also the opinion in Amsterdam 1987, p. 324, no. 1.107.
2 Relevés Météorologiques, Parc de Saint-Maur, May 1886, A 14, under Journal Météorologique, Paris, Météo France.
3 Letters 1958, vol. 1, p. XL. De la Faille 1928, p. 69, no. 231; which was only adopted in Paris 1961, p. 38, no. 118. That description would have been based on an oral communication from Jo van Gogh-Bonger. Despite that fairly reliable provenance, De la Faille's description of the view was largely ignored in later publications and then forgotten altogether. Hulsker 1996, p. 241, doubted whether it was made from the rue Lepic apartment. Van Heugten accepted that it was, but with reservations (Rome 1988, no. 20), but he too thought it might have preceded the move. Jo was wrong when she said that the apartment was on the third floor; it was on the fourth floor (Teio Meedendorp, *The view of rue Lepic 54*, manuscript, to be published).
4 This was pointed out by Gérard Jouhet and André Roussard independently of De la Faille's description.
5 It can be deduced from a letter that Andries Bonger wrote to his parents on 23 June (b 1843) that the brothers must have moved before that date: 'Had I already told you about Van Gogh, [that] he has moved to Montmartre' ('Heb ik u al verteld van Van Gogh verhuisd is naar Montmartre'). The start of that sentence suggests that the move had taken place some time before.
6 Letter 568, note 1. The layout of the apartment is still essentially the same, apart from the fact that there are now two windows at the back, not one. Theo's bedroom was at the front, with the living room beside it.



56 View from Vincent's studio



56a Photograph taken from the fourth floor of 54 rue Lepic, 2001.



56b The Pignel-Dupont sticker on the back of cat. 56.



56c Detail of cat. 56 photographed in raking light.

as Van Gogh had done in Antwerp (cat. 46, fig. 46a). A dark grey layer can be seen underneath the white clouds in the sky and probably under the blue roofs in the distance as well. In Antwerp Van Gogh was still working his scenes up in the wet underlayer, but here he first allowed the coloured underpaint to dry thoroughly, as can be seen from the clear line dividing it from subsequent layers in paint cross-sections.[7] He then painted the entire view in a single session, working first with a broad brush before using finer ones to add the details in the chimneys and foliage while the paint was still wet. It can be seen from a photograph taken in raking light and the X-radiograph that there is a fairly thick underlayer with diagonal brush-strokes in the lower left corner (fig. 56c), so the tree or bush in the foreground must originally have been much larger.

Enlarging on his Antwerp studies, Van Gogh continued experimenting here with an underpaint in contrasting colours. He had already done so in the sky of *Path in Montmartre* (cat. 55), but now it is more pronounced. There is more refinement in the way the underlying colours contribute to the finished effect. The underlayer has been left partly exposed or shows through the layer above, and one can see a complementary colour contrast by the houses in the foreground, which were underpainted with bright, light tones. The blue covers an orange-reddish underpaint, while the pink covers a turquoise-green one. Van Gogh played with those complementary contrasts in the details of the scene by using red and pink in the forms in the blue passages, as can be seen from the bright pink, light orange and red brush-strokes used for the chimneys, and the blue fronts of the houses. He chose his colours very carefully. The transparent deep viridian green that he preferred in Paris for dark mixtures is also mixed with other pigments here,[8] in the dark foliage for instance, while he used almost pure, vivid emerald green for the bright accents.

7 It can be seen that the underpaint was a separate layer from the many places where the paint applied on top of it has flaked off.
8 See p. 139.



56d *View from Theo's apartment* (F 265 JH 1100), 1886. Dublin, National Gallery of Ireland.

This must have been one of the first, if not *the* first painting that Van Gogh made in his new studio, and he evidently went to the nearest artists' supplier, Pignel-Dupont, for the materials he needed. Jo van Gogh-Bonger wrote that her brother-in-law 'first painted his immediate surroundings' after the move, mentioning that he took as his model 'the view from the studio window', which can only be a reference to this painting.[9] He recorded the view of the hills of Meudon that could be seen from the front of the apartment at almost the same time in a slightly larger study (fig. 56d), which speaks volumes about the pleasure he took from the view from his new, lofty home (see also cat. 95).

9 Letters 1958, vol. 1, p. XL.

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
Bonger 1890, no. 37 [Vue d'une fenêtre]; Van Gogh-Bonger 1914, p. XLVII; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 69, vol. 2, pl. LXII; De la Faille 1939, p. 198, no. 252; Letters 1958, p. XL; De la Faille 1970, pp. 120, 620; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 85, 201, note 18, 231; Hulsker 1977, pp. 238, 241; Hulsker 1980, pp. 238, 241; Amsterdam 1987, p. 324, no. 1.107; Rome 1988, no. 20; Hulsker 1996, pp. 238, 241; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 70, 285, 306.

EXHIBITIONS
1905 Amsterdam I, no. 49 [Dfl. 550]; 1928 Berlin, no. 14; 1928 Vienna, no. 6; 1928 Frankfurt am Main, no. 6; 1929 Utrecht, no. 10 [not for sale]; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 25; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 54; 1961 Paris, no. 118; 1988 Rome, no. 20; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 16.

57
Torso of Venus

Paris, mid-June 1886
Oil on *carton*
46.0 x 38.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 56 V/1962
F 216a JH 1054

58
Torso of Venus

Paris, mid-June 1886
Oil on *carton*
46.0 x 38.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 89 V/1962
F 216b JH 1060

59
Horse

Paris, mid-June 1886
Oil on *carton*
33.0 x 41.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 202 V/1962
F 216c JH 1082

60
Torso of Venus

Paris, mid-June 1886
Oil on *carton*
35.0 x 27.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 101 V/1962
F 216d JH 1071

61
Male torso

Paris, mid-June 1886
Oil on *carton*
35.0 x 27.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 103 V/1962
F 216e JH 1078

62
Kneeling écorché

Paris, mid-June 1886
Oil on *carton*
35.0 x 27.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 102 V/1962
F 216f JH 1076

63
Torso of Venus

Paris, mid-June 1886
Oil on *carton*
35.0 x 27.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 201 V/1962
F 216j JH 1059



57 Torso of Venus



58 Torso of Venus



59 Horse



60 Torso of Venus



61 Male torso



62 Kneeling écorché



63 Torso of Venus

57a *Study after a woman's torso* (F 216 JH 1348), 1887. Hakone, Hakone Ashinoko Museum of Fine Art.



Van Gogh made at least 32 drawings and 12 oil studies after plaster casts while he was in Paris (cats. 57-63, 85-87, figs. 57a, 57b).[1] For a long time it was thought that he made them all in Cormon's studio, but that view was modified some time ago. Around 20 of the sheets could be assigned to that period of study, but it now seems likely that the other works, both drawings and paintings, were made in Theo's apartment after plaster casts from Van Gogh's own collection.[2]

It is strange that it was thought for so long that the paintings were made after reduced plaster replicas of classical sculptures in Cormon's studio because, as in the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, students on private courses made drawings after them, but never paintings.[3] Artists did paint studies after plaster casts in their own studios (fig. 57c).[4] They were also used to compose still lifes, and whether the painters knew it or not they were then following in the footsteps of 17th-century Dutch masters, who often included copies after classical sculptures in still lifes, chiefly those with a *vanitas* theme.[5] The genre includes Henri Fantin-Latour's ambitious *Flowers and various objects* of 1874 (fig. 57d), as well as Van Gogh's *Still life with plaster statuette and books* of 1887 (fig. 57e). The works discussed in this entry, however, had a different function, as explained below.

We have only a very rough idea of the size of Van Gogh's collection of plaster casts. He had at least eleven, seven of which have survived.[6] They are the death mask of a young woman, a bust of a man, a mask of Dante,[7] a kneeling *écorché*, the original of which probably dates from the 15th century (fig. 57f), a reduced copy after Michelangelo's *Dying slave* of 1513 (fig. 57g), a model of a horse after a classical statue (fig. 57h), such as Marcus Aurelius's on the Piazza del Campidoglio in Rome, and the torso of a seated Venus (fig. 57i).[8] The four lost casts were the torso of a standing Venus from the 1st or 2nd century AD (fig. 57j, see cat. 58), a torso of Venus missing the left leg (see cat. 60), a male torso (see cat. 61), and a copy after Michelangelo's *Young slave* of 1516-30 (fig. 57k).[9] Plaster is a fragile material, and it can be assumed that the last four



57b X-radiograph of cat. 69.

1 This does not include F 360 JH 1349 (fig. 57e), which shows not only a plaster cast but other objects as well. For the drawings, excluding the sketchbook sheets of these subjects, see Drawings 3, cats. 245, 251-71, 276-86. One of the oil studies was later overpainted with a flower still life, as first pointed out in Van Heugten 1995, p. 77, no. 12. It is stated in that article that there is also a study of a plaster cast under cat. 63 (ibid., p. 78, no. 13), but that was based on a botched X-radiograph. On closer inspection it turned out to be a photograph of two paintings, cats. 57 and 58, accidentally placed one on top of the other, both of the same female torso.

2 When the family collection was inventoried in the 1980s it was discovered that it had long contained four plaster casts after statuettes (Amsterdam 1987, pp. 498, 499, nos. 3.2-3.3, and 3.5-3.6). Van Gogh made both drawings and paintings after those models, and the looser style of the drawings led Heenk 1995, pp. 146-49, to believe that he had not, in any event, made them in Cormon's studio. That theory was developed in Drawings 3, cats. 251-71 and 276-86. The drawings made after plaster casts in Cormon's studio are all larger (cats. 251-71), while those after the casts in his own collection are smaller (cats. 276-86).

3 See Boime 1971 for the official academic curriculum. Although there was more latitude for personal interpretation in artists' studios, there is nothing to indicate that there was a fundamental difference between the exercises there and at the academy.

4 They include Paul Cézanne (Rewald *et al.* 1996, vol. 1, no. 33); Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (Dortu 1971, vol. 2, nos. 161, 216); Edgar Degas (Lemoinse 1984, vol. 2, nos. 24, 39, and Brame/Reff 1984, no. 2) and Gustave Caillebotte (Berhaut 1994, cats. 550-53, and see also p. 64, cat. 10).

5 See Haak 1996, pp. 125-28.

6 Van Gogh Museum, inv. nos. v 3-5, v 35, v 36, v 50, v 51; see also Köster/Tjebbes 1997-98, pp. 70-75, figs. 4-14.

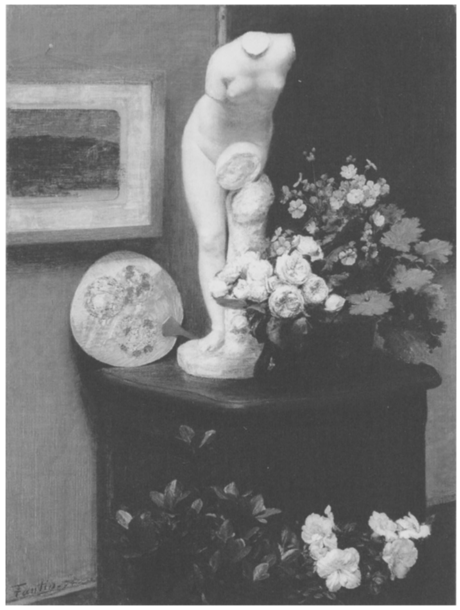
7 Van Gogh Museum, inv. nos. v 3-5. There is a record of a former label on the mask of Dante stating that it was bought from the Paris colourman Louis Latouche (1829-84), the former landscape painter and art dealer, at 34 rue Lafayette. See Köster/Tjebbes 1997-98, p. 72, for the label. Latouche opened his shop in 1867, and it was run after his death by his wife, who passed it on to P. Contet in 1886; see Distel 1989, pp. 33, 34. Van Gogh is known to have been a customer there, for he mentions it later in his correspondence (letters 630 and 657).

8 Inv. nos. v 35, 36, 50 and 51. See Heenk 1995, pp. 146-49, and Drawings 3, pp. 187-89, for the identification of these statuettes.

9 This identification of the casts is based on the drawings and paintings of them. See the main text of the entry and notes 12-15.



57c Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Study of a male torso*, c. 1882. Albi, Musée Toulouse-Lautrec.



57d Henri Fantin-Latour, *Flowers and various objects*, 1874. Gothenburg, Kunstmuseum.



57e *Still life with plaster statuette and books* (F 360 JH 1349), 1887. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.

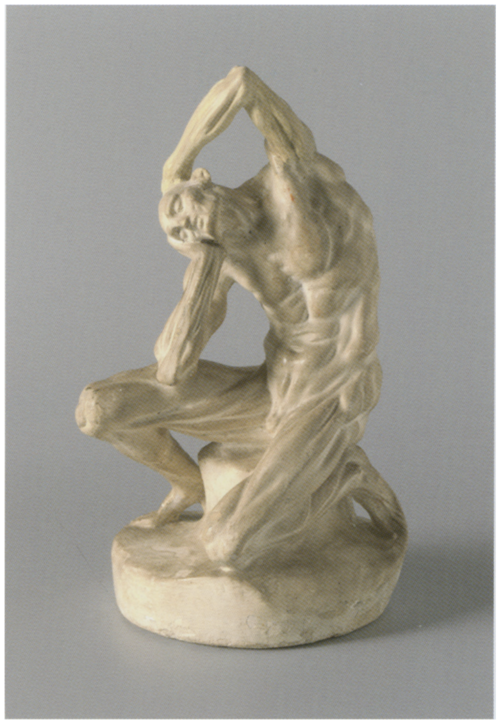
have perished.[10] For example, the cast of the torso of a standing Venus was still in the family collection at the beginning of the 20th century, as can be seen from a photograph of Jo Bonger's second husband, Johan Cohen Gosschalk (fig. 57l). It is standing on the cupboard behind him on the right, with the surviving plaster copy after Michelangelo's *Dying slave* and the torso of the seated Venus on the left (see figs. 57g, 57i).

Van Gogh made paintings after seven of his eleven casts.[11] His favourite was the torso of the standing Venus (fig. 57j), which he depicted five times in oils (cats. 57, 58, 63, 86, 87).[12] He made two paintings after the torso of Venus minus the left leg (cats. 60, 85), and one after the male torso (cat. 61).[13] He also made one study after the kneeling *écorché* (cat. 62 and fig. 57f), one after the statuette of the horse (cat. 59 and fig. 57h), one after his cast after Michelangelo's *Dying slave* that he later overpainted (figs. 57b, 57g), and one after the torso of the seated Venus (fig. 57a, 57i).[14]

The twelve works are on different supports: three on canvas (cats. 86, 87, and fig. 57a) and nine on *carton* (cats. 57-63, 85, and fig. 57b). They differ in size, but all are in fact small studies, with one exception (fig. 57a). The latter, a painting on canvas, is considerably larger than the others at 75 x 34 cm and also has different, more carefully considered but still rough brushwork.

The studies have long been regarded as a self-contained series,[15] but after a while the large canvas (fig. 57a) was removed from it.[16] And rightly so, but neither do the other works, which are all in the Van Gogh Museum, form a coherent group. They fall into two kinds of exercise. If we include the work that he later overpainted (fig. 57b), Van Gogh decided on a heavily impasted, painterly treatment for eight of the

10 The seven other, surviving statuettes have also suffered. They were restored in 1992; see Köster/Tjebbes 1997-98, pp. 68-74, with photographs of some of them prior to restoration on pp. 70-72, 74. See also Amsterdam 1987, pp. 498, 499, nos. 3.2-3.3, 3.5-3.6.
11 As far as is known Van Gogh did not make any paintings or drawings after the death mask of a young woman, the bust of an unknown man or the mask of Dante. Nor did he make any paintings after Michelangelo's *Young slave* (fig. 57k), although he did draw it (Drawings 3, cat. 282). The torso of the seated Venus and the horse (figs. 57i, 57h) were the subject of paintings (fig. 57a and cat. 59) but not of drawings.
12 This is also clear from the five drawings he made after it (Drawings 3, cats. 276-80).
13 He made two drawings of the torso of Venus without the left leg (Drawings 3, cats. 281, 286), and one after the male torso (Drawings 3, cat. 284).
14 There is one drawing after the kneeling *écorché* (Drawings 3, cat. 285), as there is after Michelangelo's *Dying slave* (Drawings 3, cat. 283).
15 De la Faille 1928, pp. 64, 65, grouped them all together under a single number: 216. In De la Faille 1970 they were then given different dates based on arguments that are unclear. Cat. 87 was assigned to late 1886; cats. 59, 60, 63 and 86 to 1886-87; cats. 61 and 62 to early 1887; and cats. 57, 58, 85 and F 216 JH 1348 (fig. 57a) to 1887.
16 Hulsker 1980, pp. 298, 303, no. 1348, removed F 216 JH 1348 (fig. 57a) from the series. He dated all the small studies to the spring of 1886, the period when, according to him, Van Gogh was studying with Cormon. He moved the large canvas to the winter of 1887-88 and grouped it with *Still life with plaster statuette and books* (fig. 57e) and the two *Skull* paintings (cats. 99, 100). However, the latter two works are dated to the first half of May 1887 in the present catalogue. Welsh-Ovcharov split the paintings into two groups (Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 229, 230). She dated all the works to around the turn of the year 1886-87, but felt that cats. 57-60 and 63 were earlier than cats. 61, 62, 85-87 and F 216 JH 1348 (fig. 57a). See note 15 above for De la Faille's opinion.



57f Plaster cast of *Kneeling écorché*, 19th century. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



57g Plaster cast of Michelangelo's *Dying slave*, 19th century. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

cartons (cats. 57-63), but adopted a draughtsman-like approach for three of the studies, two canvases and one *carton* (cats. 85-87). The first group is discussed in this entry and dated mid-June 1886, with the exception of the overpainted study (cat. 69), while the remainder were made in the first half of 1887 and are treated in cats. 85-87.

The seven studies in this entry are all on prepared *carton* of standard sizes which Van Gogh bought from the Pignel-Dupont shop at 17 rue Lepic. Six of the seven supports bore the shop's sticker (cats. 57-59, 61-63; see Table 1), originally on the backs but then on the protective backboard after the addition of plywood supports in 1929.[17] Four of the labels also list the price of the supports. Those for *Male torso* (cat. 61), *Kneeling écorché* (cat. 62) and one of the torsos of Venus (cat. 63) cost 50 centimes, while the larger one for *Horse* (cat. 59) cost 65 centimes. This was far cheaper than even the cheapest canvases of the same sizes.

Five of the seven paintings (cats. 59-63) have a light grey priming, the complex composition of which is exactly the same as that of the seven other *cartons* in Van Gogh's oeuvre (cats. 56, 68, 69, 97, 98, 121, 122; see Table 2). The two others have white priming (cats. 57, 58) with a composition that matches that of *Path in Montmartre* and *Shoes* (cats. 55, 73). Almost all the paintings have holes left by drawing pins, but as a result of later retouching it is not always possible to say whether the *carton* was pinned up during or after painting. Some of the drawing pins were inserted at top centre (cats. 57, 58), others in the corners (cats. 59, 61). In *Male torso* (cat. 61) the original paint extends across the hole, so that one was pinned up, perhaps on the wall after completion.

The series has always been dated quite approximately up to now, in both 1886 and 1887.[18] However, such a broad span took no account of the study after Michelangelo's *Young slave*, which was overpainted with a flower still life between the end of June and the middle of July 1886 (fig. 57b, cat. 69), which tells us that the entire series was painted before then. The next important question is whether the paintings were made while Van Gogh was studying with Cormon, from March to early June 1886, or soon after he left the studio.[19] Before answering that we have

17 This sticker has also been found on the *carton* supports of *View from Vincent's studio* (cat. 56) and *Small bottle with peonies and blue delphiniums* (cat. 68). The protective backboards were applied around 1910 by the Amsterdam framers M. van Menk. In 1929 they were glued to the plywood backing support added by the restorer J.C. Traas, with the exception of cat. 68, which has not been marouflaged. See further p. 29, note 7, and p. 98, note 27. Unfortunately, almost all the studies have warped due to the sensitivity to damp of the backing supports. In addition, a liquid was spattered or spilled on the *Kneeling écorché* (cat. 62) before 1929, as can be seen in a photograph of it in De la Faille 1928, vol. 2, pl. LIX. This can still be seen in the present varnish, where some of the affected areas are matt.
18 Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 229, 230 (second half of 1886 [cats. 57-60, 69] and first half of 1887 [cats. 61, 62]); Drawings 3, pp. 187, 188 (1887); Hulsker 1977, pp. 226-34 (April-June 1886). See also note 15 above.
19 Van Gogh's abandonment of his studies coincided with the brothers' move to 54 rue Lepic. On this see also Van Tilborgh 2007, p. 54, and cat. 56.



57h Plaster cast of a horse, 19th century. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

to take a look at the function of the paintings. What was Van Gogh trying to achieve with them?

The works are exercises in the depiction of the volumes of bodies using a loaded brush. He was experimenting with 'modelling by drawing directly with a brush', as he described this approach when he was studying in Antwerp, in which he conceived of '[figure painting] totally differently from Bouguereau and others, who lack interior modelling, are *flat*' [555].[20] The traditional practice was that the effect of volume was attained by the proper placement of light and shadow, but Van Gogh concentrated entirely on brushwork and only indicated shadows in a very rudimentary way.

The seven paintings are similar in design. There are occasional traces of underdrawing along the outlines of the figures, for which Van Gogh used different materials: fine pencil lines in three of the studies (cats. 58, 62, 63), and in the other four thinned blue paint that was also used to wash in the shadows here and there (cats. 57, 59-61). It can be seen in three of the studies (cats. 57, 58, 62) that the figures were prepared with pale pink, making them stand out warmly against the white or grey ground at an early stage. After the underdrawing and underpainting Van Gogh applied contours and shadows, followed by the mid-tones and finally the highest lights.

Within this general structure Van Gogh experimented with the consistency of the paint and brushwork in combination with subtle differences in colour and tone. He was searching for the limits of modelling with paint. What were the maximum and minimum approaches? In two of the torsos of Venus, for example (cats. 57, 58), the brushstrokes almost invariably follow the curvatures of the statuette, so that one can rightly speak of 'drawing with the brush'. The effect of round forms was also enhanced by applying the paint almost as if modelling with clay: fairly smooth in the shadows and very thick and rough in the light passages. That varied manner is not repeated in the painting of the horse (cat. 59), where the brushstrokes barely follow the curves at all and the paint is almost equally thick everywhere, which

20 Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 133, noted that 'the interior modelling plays the primary role', but did not associate that with Van Gogh's development. See also pp. 67, 68.



57i Plaster cast of a torso of Venus, 19th century. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



57j Torso of Venus, 1st-2nd century AD. London, British Museum.



57k Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Young slave*, 1516-30. Florence, Galleria dell' Academia.

makes the profile view of the statuette look particularly flat. Van Gogh sought for a middle way between these two extremes in *Male torso* and *Kneeling écorché* (cats. 61, 62). He also used brushes of different thickness for his experiments, as measurements of the brushstrokes show. He did not use his best brushes for these exercises but old, or at least inferior ones. Loose bristles were found embedded in the paint in several of these studies, particularly in one of the torsos of Venus (cat. 57).

The backgrounds were also part of these experiments in modelling with paint. The use of blue as the background colour was a continuation of his old search for spaciousness (see cats. 47, 48). In Antwerp he had written that he felt that cobalt blue was the ideal colour for 'putting space around things' [550], but here, instead of that costly pigment, he used the cheap Prussian blue, sometimes in combination with French ultramarine.[21] He varied the tint by mixing it with white, red and green. The table tops also vary in colour from bluish (cats. 57-61) to green and orange (cat. 63), purplish brown (cat. 62) and greyish (cat. 59). This enabled him to study how the colour and tonal differences of the background affected the volumes of the figures.

Van Gogh also varied his brushwork in the background in his search for the relationship between a figure and its surroundings. It is sometimes not very pronounced (cat. 57), sometimes long (cat. 61), sometimes arbitrary (cat. 59), sometimes like basketwork (cat. 63), and sometimes there is a nimbus effect created by painting around the outlines of the figure (cats. 58, 60, 62). In most cases, Van Gogh worked simultaneously on the backgrounds and the figures. Only in *Horse* (cat. 59) and one of the torsos of a standing Venus (cat. 57) did he complete the background after the figures and then use blue to accentuate the outlines of the figures even more. It is striking that it was in those very two works that he painted the statuettes with a very buttery white. He probably chose that warm colour to contrast with the grey or white ground of the *carton*, which had remained uncovered until the very last moment

21 Prussian blue had the reputation of discolouring to greenish; see Carlyle 2001, p. 476. See Kirby/Saunders 2004 for a recent investigation of Prussian blue fading and changing colour. However, examinations and paint samples give no reason to believe that Van Gogh's studies have discoloured. See letter 549 for his use of cobalt blue.



571 Photograph of Johan Cohen Gosschalk, between 1901 and 1912. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

Van Gogh started to feel the need to concentrate on the volumes of his figures towards the end of his time in Nuenen.[22] He hoped to master this 'solid modelling' [558] at the Antwerp academy, and later in Cormon's studio in Paris, but in practice he discovered that both placed more emphasis on the importance of contour.[23] That did not help him in the slightest to achieve his ideal of modelling with paint, which is why he must have decided to train himself in it by making paintings of plaster casts. He would probably have preferred to do so with a nude model, but lack of money forced him to make do with these cheap alternatives.

This brings us back to the question of dating. Would Van Gogh have carried out these exercises, with which he wanted to correct the traditional approach to drawing after the model, during or after his period in Cormon's studio? It hardly seems conceivable, either practically or psychologically, that he would have started on the series while he was still there, in March-June 1886. In the first place, Jo said that Theo's apartment in rue Laval was too small for him to be able to paint in it, and although he almost certainly did do some work there (see cats. 52-54), it is unlikely that he would have been allowed to use it continually as his workplace, or at least evening after evening.[24] Secondly, he was not the kind of person to work on two fundamentally contradictory exercises at one and the same time. With him it was usually one thing or the other, and it is for these reasons that we are assuming that the series dates from after the brothers' move and after Van Gogh left Cormon's studio. That also seems to tie in with the source of the *carton* supports, the Pignel-Dupont shop at 17 rue Lepic, just down the street from the new apartment that the brothers moved into at the beginning of June.

The drawings that Van Gogh made after the plaster casts in his own collection would have preceded the paintings, because he would probably have explored the subjects in drawings first.[25] Only three of the sheets display clear compositional similarities to the painted studies (cats. 58, 60, 62),[26] and in two of those cases they

22 On this see p. 68.
23 See Drawings 3, cat. 218, pp. 63-70, cats. 238-71, pp. 112-72.
24 Letters 1958, vol. 1, p. XL.
25 These sheets are all dated to 1887 in Drawings 3, cats. 276-86, but in view of the new dating of Van Gogh's period in Cormon's studio (see Van Tilborgh 2007) they and the oil studies are here dated to the middle of June 1886. Given its stripy style, only F 1365 JH 1086 (Drawings 3, cat. 283) was definitely not made in 1886, but would date from the first half of 1887 (cf. Drawings 3, cats. 293-99, 306).
26 Ibid., cats. 277, 281, 285.

are coincidental. Only the sheet with the *Kneeling écorché* is thought to have served as a preliminary study for the painting of the same subject (cat. 62), but that is far from certain.[27]

The seven paintings on *carton* are not listed in the inventory that was made of Theo's collection at the end of 1890. Only the three paintings of 1887 on canvas are (fig. 57a; cats. 86, 87).[28] Jo van Gogh-Bonger did not rate the studies after plaster casts at all highly, because she did not include any of them in a commercial exhibition. However, the largest canvas (fig. 57a) did catch the eye of other people, and in 1910 it and *Still life with plaster statuette and books* (fig. 57e) were sold to the Berlin dealer Paul Cassirer.[29]

27 Ibid., cat. 285.
28 Bonger 1890, nos. 60 ('Torse/d'après antique'), 305 and 306 (both as 'Etude d'après l'antique'), which are fig. 57a and cats. 86 (or 87) and 87 (or 86). These are the only three works with plaster casts that are on canvas. The remainder are on *carton*, which makes it likely that the canvases are what were meant, with the large, more detailed one being no. 60, since it is not called a study.
29 Stolwijk/Veenenbos 2002, pp. 53, 129, 150, 163, 168 (nos. 18/8 and 99/1), and for *Still life with plaster statuette and books* see ibid., p. 170.

Cat. 57

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 64, vol. 2, pl. LVIII; De la Faille 1939, p. 191, no. 240; De la Faille 1970, pp. 114, 619; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 123, notes 37 and 40, p. 229; Hulsker 1977, p. 230; Hulsker 1980, p. 230; Amsterdam 1987, p. 325, no. 1.111; Murray 1991, p. 45; Hulsker 1996, p. 230; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 45, 73, notes 36, 37, 39; Coyle 2007, pp. 277, 281.

Exhibitions
1948-49 The Hague, no. 41; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 77a; 1964 Recklinghausen, no. 111; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 14; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2010-11 Haarlem, unnumbered.

Cat. 58

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 64, vol. 2, pl. LIX [ill. of 216h]; De la Faille 1939, p. 190, no. 238 [ill. of F 216j]; De la Faille 1970, pp. 114, 619; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 123, notes 37 and 40, p. 230; Hulsker 1977, pp. 228, 231; Hulsker 1980, pp. 228, 231; Amsterdam 1987, p. 325, no. 1.113; Murray 1991, p. 45; Hulsker 1996, pp. 230, 231; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 45, 73, notes 36, 37, 39; Coyle 2007, p. 277.

Exhibitions
1948-49 The Hague, no. 42; 1955 Antwerp, no. 162; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 76; 1957-58 Stockholm, no. 107, Luleå, Kiruna, Umeå, Östersund, Sandviken & Gothenburg, no cat. known; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 20; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 15; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 15; 1964 Recklinghausen, no. 110; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2010-11 Haarlem, unnumbered.

Cat. 59

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 64, vol. 2, pl. LVII; De la Faille 1939, p. 194, no. 245; De la Faille 1970, pp. 114, 619; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 123, notes 37 and 40, p. 230; Hulsker 1977, p. 234; Hulsker 1980, p. 235; Amsterdam 1987, p. 326, no. 1.120; Hulsker 1996, p. 234; Köster/Tjebbes 1997-98, pp. 68-70; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 45, 73, notes 36, 39; Coyle 2007, p. 277.

Exhibitions
1947 Groningen, no. 28; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 43; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 77e; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2005-06 Amsterdam & Pittsburgh, unnumbered.

Cat. 60

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 64 [no ill.]; not in De la Faille 1939; De la Faille 1970, pp. 114, 619; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 123, notes 37 and 40, p. 230; Hulsker 1977, pp. 230, 232, 233; Hulsker 1980, pp. 228, 232, 233; Amsterdam 1987, p. 326, no. 1.116; Hulsker 1996, pp. 230, 232, 233; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 73, notes 36, 39; Coyle 2007, p. 278.

Exhibitions
1948-49 The Hague, no. 44; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.

Cat. 61

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 65, vol. 2, pl. LIX; De la Faille 1939, p. 192, no. 242; De la Faille 1970, pp. 114, 619; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 123, notes 37 and 40, p. 230; Hulsker 1977, p. 234; Hulsker 1980, p. 234; Amsterdam 1987, p. 326, no. 1.118; Hulsker 1996, p. 234; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 45, 73, notes 36, 39; Coyle 2007, p. 278.

Exhibitions
1948-49 The Hague, no. 45; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, ex catalogue; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 77b; 1964-65 Delft & Antwerp, no. 52; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.

Cat. 62

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 65, vol. 2, pl. LIX; De la Faille 1939, p. 192, no. 243; De la Faille 1970, pp. 114, 619; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 123, note 40, p. 230; Hulsker 1977, p. 233; Hulsker 1980, p. 233; Amsterdam 1987, p. 326, no. 1.119; Hulsker 1996, pp. 232, 233; Köster/Tjebbes 1997-98, pp. 69, 70; Munich 2001, pp. 244, 245, no. 98; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 45, 73, notes 36, 39.

EXHIBITIONS
1948-49 The Hague, no. 46; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 77c; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2001 Munich, no. 98; 2010-11 Tokyo, Fukuoka & Nagoya, no. 58.

Cat. 63

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 65, vol. 2, pl. LVIII [ill. of 216b]; not in De la Faille 1939; De la Faille 1970, pp. 116, 620; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 123, notes 37 and 40, p. 230; Hulsker 1977, pp. 228, 231; Hulsker 1980, pp. 228, 231; Amsterdam 1987, p. 325, no. 1.115; Murray 1991, p. 45; Van Heugten 1995, p. 78, no. 13; Hulsker 1996, pp. 230, 231; Kendall 1999, p. 33; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 45, 73, notes 36, 39; Coyle 2007, p. 277.

EXHIBITIONS
1948-49 The Hague, no. 49; 1969-70 Los Angeles, Saint Louis & Philadelphia, no. 11; 1970-71 Baltimore, San Francisco & New York, no. 11; 1971-72 Paris, no. 15; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.

64
The hill of Montmartre with stone quarry

65
The hill of Montmartre with stone quarry

64
Paris, June-mid-July 1886
Oil on canvas
32.0 x 40.9 cm
Signed at lower left: Vincent
Inv. s 64 V/1962
F 229 JH 1176

65
Paris, June-mid-July 1886
Oil on canvas
56.0-56.3 x 62.2 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 12 V/1962
F 230 JH 1177

The hill of Montmartre had been dotted with windmills since time immemorial, but only three were left when Van Gogh came to live in Paris: the Blute-fin and the Radet, both of which dated from the 17th century, and the 19th-century Poivre.[1] They all stood on a single site known as the Moulin de la Galette (see fig. 92a), along with places of entertainment (cafés, a dance hall, an observation deck and gardens) run by the Debray family, who were the owners.

The mills stood out picturesquely against the sky when seen from the rural side of the hill, which had not yet been built on (see fig. 64a). It was a striking sight that had been popular with artists of the previous generation (figs. 64d, 64f). Van Gogh painted the hill from a distant vantage point in the late spring and early summer of 1886. There are three such scenes: the study *The Hill of Montmartre*, which is now in the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo (fig. 64b), and the two later paintings discussed here (cats. 64, 65).[2] These three studies were preceded by a drawing in which Van Gogh studied the main subject of the Blute-fin mill in detail (fig. 64c).[3]

The two canvases in the Van Gogh Museum were painted near a stone quarry in rue Caulaincourt (cf. fig. 64d).[4] The two scenes are almost identical, the field of view being slightly wider in the larger one (cat. 65). We are looking to the south-east with, from right to left on the horizon, the top of the Blute-fin, a building with a staggered roof (the Debrays' old farmhouse), and the Poivre.[5] The Radet is only visible in the distance in the large painting.

A comparison with the picture in Otterlo (fig. 64b) is instructive about the topography. Here Van Gogh took a position further up rue Caulaincourt, and the view is due south.[6] The vantage point is also lower than in the Amsterdam paintings, which makes the Blute-fin look much taller. It also stands to the left of the building with the staggered roof, not to the right of it. That difference might appear surprising but it is not contradictory, because the three mills and the old farmhouse did not stand in a straight line. Further evidence that it was to the right of the farmhouse when seen from further to the west is provided by a painting by Mathijs Maris (fig. 64d).

The grassland in the two Amsterdam paintings can be seen on the far right in the one in Otterlo. Van Gogh decided to include almost none of the garden sheds in this particular area, gave rudimentary indications of the ground to the left of the grassland and omitted most of the sheds there too. Boulders are scattered across the quarry. On the right is a stack of tree trunks between posts, and on the left is a figure in a blue workman's smock, possibly a quarry employee.

1 See Roussard 2001, pp. 244-61, for a useful summary of the history of the windmills.
2 His sketchbooks contain three views of the three mills: Van der Wolk 1987, nos. 4/1 (F 1394 JH 1181), 6/31 (F – JH –) and 6/63 (F Juv. XXIX JH –).
3 This work, F 1397 JH 1173, has always been dated to the autumn of 1886, but the light green of the grass in the foreground shows that in fact it is a springtime scene (see Brescia 2005-06, no. 73, p. 364). This redating makes it worth taking another look at the authenticity of F 1398 JH 1174, which used to be regarded as the only exploratory drawing but it was rejected from the oeuvre in 2001 (Drawings 3, pp. 327, 328, Appendix 2.2).
4 For the quarries see Roussard 2001, pp. 85, 86. They were quite a popular subject among artists. Matthijs Maris, for example, whom Van Gogh got to know in Paris in 1874-76, painted them on several occasions (see fig. 64d).
5 The building with the staggered roof is identical to the house in F 810 JH 2109, which Roland Dorn was the first to identify correctly in Essen/Amsterdam 1990-91, p. 81, no. 11. See also cat. 115.
6 Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 237, was a little suspicious about this painting, but there was no need to be. See Otterlo 2003, pp. 140-42.



64 The hill of Montmartre with stone quarry



65 The hill of Montmartre with stone quarry



64a Photograph of the hill of Montmartre seen from rue Caulaincourt, c. 1890. From: Philippe Mellot, *La vie secrète de Montmartre*, Paris 2008, p. 96.

The three works (fig. 64b, cats. 64, 65), which are in a style and technique reminiscent of the School of Barbizon, shows that Van Gogh wanted to make a large, ambitious painting of the subject. As noted above, he began by exploring the central motif of the Blute-fin mill in a drawing (fig. 64c), and then painted his first view of the hill as a whole from a distant vantage point in the Otterlo painting (fig. 64b). The orchards in blossom on the left place this scene in the period from late April to the middle of May, when Van Gogh was still working in Cormon's studio. This was followed by the small Amsterdam landscape (cat. 64), which was painted sometime in the summer, in which Van Gogh drastically altered his viewpoint. There had been little difference in height between the plain and the crest of the hill in the first painting (fig. 64b), and it may have been in order to correct this that he now showed the hill from one side and omitted most of the garden allotments, making the view look far more rural. On the right are tall hedgerows in full leaf, and in the field on the left with its swaying, undulating stalks of grass are red dots which can hardly be anything but poppies, the flowering time of which has enabled us to date the painting to June to mid-July.[7] The third and largest scene (cat. 65), which has almost the same viewpoint, would have been made shortly after the second one.

Van Gogh chose a canvas with a very fine weave for the first painting (fig. 64b),[8] but for the next two he used a cheap quality of canvas that was chiefly intended for studies (Table 3.3, nos. 7, 9). It was a support that he used for more of his open-air landscapes in Paris (cats. 92, 93, 115).[9] The small one is a pre-stretched, standard *figure* 6 size, while the large one is composed of a spare piece of canvas and bars which have standard lengths on their own but do not make up standard sizes in combination. He did that on more than one occasion (cats. 92, 93).

7 It was dated to October 1886 in De la Faille 1970, and that was extended to autumn 1886 in the subsequent literature. Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 232, was alone in believing that it could have been painted that summer. Roskill 1970 II, p. 11, however, felt that it could date from the early winter of 1886-87.
8 Scientific and technical report on F 266 JH 1175 (fig. 64b) by L. Struick van der Loeff, 2 September 2003, Kröller-Müller Museum conservation archives.
9 For this type of canvas see p. 104.



64b *The hill of Montmartre* (F 266 JH 1175), 1886. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.

The canvases in the Van Gogh Museum have a white ground composed of a thin layer of chalk beneath a thicker one consisting chiefly of lead white. The ground beneath the large landscape (cat. 65) has a remarkably lumpy structure that detracts from the spatial illusion in the landscape (fig. 64e). That irritating phenomenon is probably due to later lining of the canvas that made the base chalk ground pulpy, creating deformations.[10]

In the small landscape (cat. 64) there is quite a detailed underdrawing in a black material for the silhouettes of the structures on the hill, and it is suspected that other areas of the landscape were underdrawn as well. The building with the staggered roof was at first a bit further to the right in the drawing, but since there was already too little space between the farmhouse and the mill Van Gogh immediately moved it to the left, and he followed the underdrawing faithfully in the paint.

The light blue sky has a pale pink underpaint that contributes to the final effect. Because that layer was not entirely dry when Van Gogh worked up the sky, the light blue actually became mixed with the pink here and there. The hill was prepared locally with subdued browns and greys mixed from yellow ochre and other earth pigments, bone black and charcoal black, which he had already been using for dark colours back in the Netherlands. Paint cross-sections show that in some places Van Gogh applied as many as four different paint layers on top of each other, including a white one to cover the first brown design. This suggests that he had difficulty in capturing the landscape at first go.

The scene was worked up wet-into-wet on the underpaint, probably in a single session. Van Gogh first filled in the sky neatly up to the outlines of the buildings, then painted in the buildings and then the landscape, leaving reserves for the slightly larger elements. He finished off the scene by adding a few elements back

10 It emerges from a bill of December 1929 from the restorer J.C. Traas (b 5618) that the painting had already been lined with glue, probably in France, where this was the traditional method, as opposed to the wax-resin lining practised in Holland. The use of a water-based adhesive appears to have been the cause of the damage to the ground.



64c *The Blute-fin windmill* (F 1397 JH 1173), 1886. Amsterdam, P. en N. de Boer Foundation.



64d Matthijs Maris, *Stone quarry near Montmartre*, c. 1875. The Hague, Gemeentemuseum.

in the studio, when the scene was already dry. The foreground was supplemented with some green and transparent red strokes, and he added his signature on the far left with the same red paint. By way of an exception he used a good-quality red lake, cochineal on an aluminium calcium substrate, so those red accents have retained their colour well. As the finishing touch he added the figure in blue, the position of which had been planned in the first session. It can be seen through the microscope that the position was marked with a vertical, fine scratch in the wet paint some 4 cm long, with the man's head being indicated with a circle.[11]

The painting now looks rather dark due to the severely yellowed varnish, whereas the palette is in fact quite light. The dominant green is enlivened with complementary pink touches. The brightest accents, apart from the red signature, are the figure's blue smock in the foreground and the red flag on the Blute-fin mill, which repeat the colour contrast of the pink and the light blue in the sky, although in a much stronger form. The handling of the brush is almost identical to that of the painting in Otterlo. In both cases the sky was painted with long, horizontal brushstrokes, while the broad, coarse treatment of the scene as a whole is only supplemented locally with delicate detailing by the fences and the mills.

That refinement is lacking in the third and last scene (cat. 65), which has so many similarities to the preceding one that it must have been laid down shortly afterwards.[12] Van Gogh kept the composition and the viewpoint almost the same, but seems to have zoomed out, so to speak. The immediate foreground with two figures is an addition that creates a repoussoir. The figures are standing on a hillock and looking into the quarry, with their dark silhouettes standing out forcefully against the light colours beyond them, which was a proven way of accentuating the perspective.

11 He did something similar in cat. 94.
12 Like the previous study, it was dated to October 1886 in De la Faille 1970. That was then extended to cover the entire autumn, the only exception being Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 232, who thought the summer was also a possibility.



64e Detail of cat. 65 showing the uneven texture of the ground.



64f Georges Michel, *Three windmills*, c. 1814-1843. The Hague, The Mesdag Collection.

This painting was not composed in the studio with the aid of the previous one, or at least the silhouettes of the buildings on the hill do not match. Like the previous work, the landscape would have been laid down on the spot, but this time Van Gogh included the Radet mill on the very left. In fact, it was totally invisible from this position, but together with his decision to include a repoussoir it shows that he was now trying to produce a mature, saleable painting, and was no longer content merely to paint a faithful reproduction of a particular spot.

No traces of an underdrawing have been found beneath the large landscape, but it was extensively underpainted compared to the previous work (cat. 64). The underlayer consisted mainly of light ochre colours and dark browns, with orange-red locally under the green of the hill, which demonstrates that Van Gogh intended to work from the mid-tones. As with the smaller canvas he chiefly used black and earth pigments, but now added some Naples yellow, with occasional red and blue touches. The muted colours and the transparent, medium-rich execution recall the conventional technique for an *ébauche*, in which the tone was always related to the final effect, to which the underpaint usually contributed, although that is not the case here.

Van Gogh worked the scene up after applying the underlayer, which was rich in medium and not fully dry, as can be seen from the drying cracks that subsequently formed. The small figures were planned at an early stage, and both the man in the blue smock and the couple in the foreground were painted directly on top of the ochre-coloured preparation. The outlines of the figures and of the mills and sheds were sharpened with light, bright strokes of the surrounding landscape and the clouds respectively, which suggests the effect of dramatic backlighting.

The finishing touches consist of bright accents, as they do in the small canvas.



64g Photograph of the dining room in Jo van Gogh-Bonger's apartment at Koninginneweg 77, Amsterdam, c. 1915. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

The palette with predominantly pink, green and blue tints is also similar in both canvases, as is the broad, loose brushwork, although it is far more varied in the large landscape. Van Gogh used coarsely textured strokes, particularly in the billowing clouds. That area was captured superbly and swiftly, and here he may have been trying to follow the example of Georges Michel (1763-1843), whom he had greatly admired for a long time and who acquired a posthumous reputation in the 1870s with his view of rural Montmartre under equally tempestuous skies (fig. 64f).

We do not know whether Van Gogh was satisfied with the finished result of the large canvas, but there are reasons to doubt it. He did not sign the canvas,[13] added no further refinements, and did not pursue the subject any further, or at least there are no surviving later paintings with the same view of the hill.[14] Jo van Gogh-Bonger may have been following his taste when she hung not this painting immediately below *The pink orchard* of 1888 in her dining room but the smaller one (fig. 64g).[15]

13 It is wrongly stated in Tokyo 1995, pp. 120, 121, no. 3, that it is signed in the quarry at bottom left. That supposed 'Vincent' turns out to be the edge of an impasted brushstroke.

14 He only returned to the subject in the summer of 1887, but then in a very different style and much larger format: *Allotments in Montmartre* (F 350 JH 1245; fig. 115a).

15 Johan van Gogh, 'The history of the collection', in Amsterdam 1987, pp. 4, 85, note 10, stated that the first study (cat. 64) was acquired at an early date by Jo's brother Hendrik Christiaan Bonger, who owned not only F 243a JH 1106 (cat. 68) but also F 309a JH 1312 (cat. 112), F 576 JH 1423, F 700 JH 1781, F 1132 JH 463 and F 1243 JH 472. In 1944, after the death of Elizabeth Hortense Bonger, it was supposedly inherited by Vincent Willem van Gogh (as reported in Drawings 2, p. 80, note 1). This, however, is based on a misapprehension. A photograph of Jo van Gogh-Bonger's dining room taken around 1915 shows that it was in her collection (fig. 64g). Johan van Gogh mixed it up with F 576 JH 1423, which was missing from his list.

Cat. 64

Provenance
1886-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1917-19 on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; 1925-52 V.W. van Gogh; 1952-60 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1960-62 Theo van Gogh Foundation; 1962 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1931-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Literature
Bonger 1890, no. 17 [Carrière de Montmartre]?; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 68, vol. 2, pl. LX; De la Faille 1939, p. 204, no. 261; De la Faille 1970, pp. 120, 620; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 146, 232; Hulsker 1977, p. 256; Hulsker 1980, p. 256; Amsterdam 1987, p. 328, no. 1.131; Sund 1992, pp. 156, 157; Hulsker 1996, pp. 254, 256; Vienna 1996, pp. 226, 227, no. 91; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 114, 116, 124; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 63; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 73, 284, 306.

Exhibitions
1892 Rotterdam, no cat. known [for sale]?; 1905 Amsterdam I, no. 66 [Dfl. 900]; 1929 Utrecht, no. 9? [not for sale] [possibly cat. 65]; 1930 London, no. 3? [possibly cat. 65]; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 24; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 53; 1949-50 New York & Chicago, no. 45; 1950 Hilversum, no. 13; 1952 Enschede, no. 16; 1952 Eindhoven, no. 20; 1996 Vienna, no. 91; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 17.

Cat. 65

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Bonger 1890, no. 17 [Carrière de Montmartre]?; Druet 1920, no. 20060; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 69, vol. 2, pl. LXIII; De la Faille 1939, p. 204, no. 262; London 1968-69, p. 61, no. 68; De la Faille 1970, pp. 120, 121, 620; Roskill 1970 II, pp. 11, 12; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 146, 232; Hulsker 1977, pp. 256, 259; London 1979-80, p. 80, no. 94; Hulsker 1980, pp. 256, 259; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 154, 155, 328, no. 1.132; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 84; Paris 1988, pp. 54, 55, no. 8; Sund 1992, pp. 156, 157; Tokyo 1995, pp. 54, 55, 120, 121, no. 3; Hulsker 1996, pp. 254, 259; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 64; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 74, 284, 306.

Exhibitions
1905 Amsterdam I, no. 59 [Dfl. 950]; 1905 Utrecht, no. 18 [Dfl. 950]; 1905 Leiden, no. 18 [Dfl. 950]; 1906 Rotterdam, no. 18; 1906 Middelburg, no cat. [Dfl. 950]; 1908 Paris, no. 7 [Ffr. 3,500]; 1908 Munich, no. 12 (Dfl. 1,500); 1908 Dresden, no. 12 [Dfl. 1,500]; 1908 Frankfurt am Main, no. 15 (for sale); 1908 Zürich, no. 7; 1908 The Hague & Amsterdam, no cat. known, no. 7; 1908 Berlin II, no cat. known [Dfl. 2,000]; 1909-10 Munich, no. 5, Frankfurt am Main, Dresden & Chemnitz, no cat. known [Dfl. 3,000]; 1910 Leiden, no cat. known; 1911 Amsterdam, no. 17 [Dfl. 4,000]; 1911-12 Hamburg, no cat. known [not for sale]; 1911-12 Bremen, no cat.; 1912 Dresden & Breslau, no. 40 (not for sale); 1923 Amsterdam, no. 119; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 31; 1928 Berlin, no. 13; 1928 Vienna, no. 10; 1928 Frankfurt am Main, no. 10; 1928-29 Hanover, Munich & Leipzig, no cat., no. 2, no cat. known; 1929 Utrecht, no. 9? [not for sale] [possibly cat. 64]; 1930 Amersfoort, no cat. known; 1930 London, no. 3? [possibly cat. 64]; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 23; 1947 Groningen, no. 26; 1949 Middelburg, no. 10; 1955 Antwerp, no. 179; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 90; 1957 Marseille, no. 28; 1957-58 Leiden & Schiedam, no. 19; 1958 Deventer, no. 15; 1958 Mons, no. 16; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 18; 1960 Cuesmes, no. 5; 1961 Paris, no. 117; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 20; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 20; 1963 Humlebæk, no. 16; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 16; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 25; 1968-69 London, no. 68; 1971-72 Paris, no. 16; 1979-80 London, no. 94; 1980 Washington, no. 65; 1988 Paris, no. 8; 1990 Cologne & Zürich, no. 63; 1995 Tokyo, no. 3; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2006-07 Brescia, no. 162.

66
View of Paris

Paris, June-July 1886
Oil on canvas
53.9 x 72.8 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 13 V/1962
F 261 JH 1101

The two panoramas of Paris that Van Gogh painted while he was living there are his first and only paintings in the genre. Now in Amsterdam and Basel (cat. 66 and fig. 66c), they were painted from the hill of Montmartre, which had long been the ideal spot for capturing spectacular views of this kind (see fig. 66a). The view is towards the south in both paintings, which is where the city centre was, although some days it was not as visible as on others. The French writer Marcel Schwob spoke in 1889 of 'the lake of fog in which swims the City of Light. Here and there, in the gaps, one vaguely sees Notre-Dame, the Panthéon, the Invalides, the Trocadéro'.[1]

The painting in Basel (fig. 66c) shows the view from the belvedere by the Blute-fin windmill, as can be seen from a comparison with a photograph of 1887 taken in front of the mill (fig. 66b). In the foreground are the roofs of the houses in the immediate vicinity of rue Lepic. The corner building in the middle marks the entrance to rue Tholozé. Beyond it are the red tiles of the southern, lower-lying part of Montmartre. On the far right is the Sainte-Trinité church, and on the left a tall building in rue Garreau. Further off, to the right of the centre, is the Opéra, and there are more monuments on the horizon, including Notre-Dame and the Panthéon (fig. 66d).[2]

All of this matches what could actually be seen from that high vantage point, with the exception of the windmill on the left. It appears to be the Radet, but in reality its sails did not face west but south. In addition, it stood to the left of the spot Van Gogh had chosen, so would not have been visible in this view. However, by moving that rural monument forward, as it were, he was creating a repoussoir that introduced depth and variation into the otherwise uniform view.[3] And, deliberately or otherwise, it identified the vantage point as the hill of Montmartre, which was the only height in Paris with windmills.

One sees almost the same view in the painting in the Van Gogh Museum (cat. 66), but there are a few important differences. The western part of the view has been omitted and the horizon has been placed a little lower down, allowing the sky to play a great part in the composition. Van Gogh also depicted more monuments in the distance (fig. 66e) and used the foreground as a repoussoir more emphatically than in the Basel painting. It was not possible to identify the houses in the foreground. All that can be said for certain is that they are not in rue Lepic near the Blute-fin mill (cf. fig. 66b). This part of the composition may have been invented, but it is also possible that the roofs and façades were depicted from a different spot on the hill which can no longer be identified topographically. It could be concluded from the lower horizon, the monuments standing out against the sky and the omission of the lower-lying part of Montmartre that this panorama was viewed from a lower vantage point than the one in Basel, but that would be incorrect. We are looking down on the foreground houses and not straight at them, and there is just as

1 For the view see Drawings 3, cats. 225-27, pp. 83, 84. The quotation is from Schwob's 'Notes sur Paris. Les Bals publices', *Le Phare de la Loire*, 5 February 1889, English quotation in Washington/Chicago 2005, p. 66.
2 The orange-brown passage with the signature on the left is probably the brickwork base of the Blute-fin mill.
3 Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov thought that the mill was in the right position (Paris 1988, p. 46), but that is not the case. The Radet did not protrude above the surrounding buildings in rue Lepic, which is how we know that this part of the composition is an invention.



66 View of Paris



66a Charles Marville, *Cloud study over Paris*, 1850-60. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation Gift, through Joyce and Robert Menschel.



66b Photograph taken from in front of the Blute-fin windmill, 1887. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes.



66c *View of Paris* (F 262 JH 1102), 1886. Basel, Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel, Kunstmuseum.

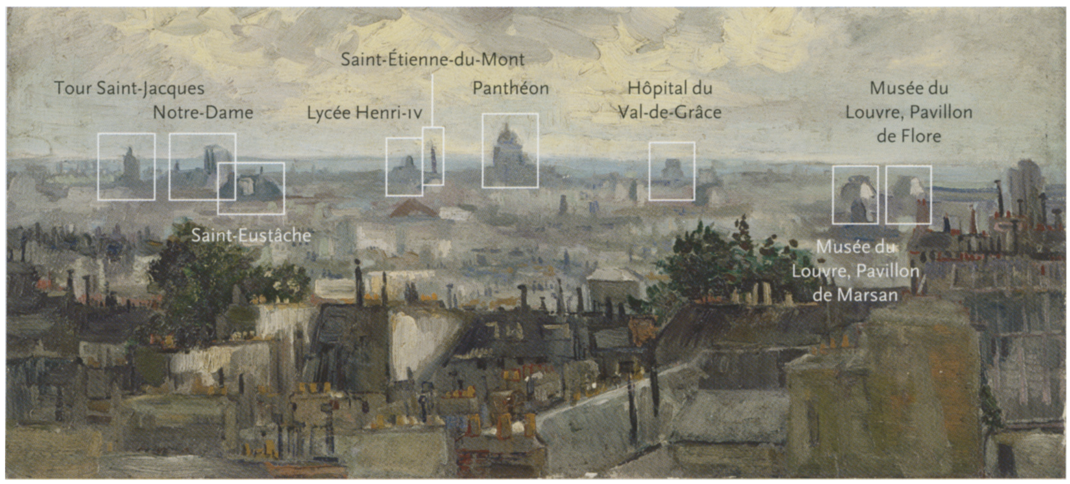
much of the distant part of the city as there is in the other painting. What this means is that the viewpoint has been heavily manipulated.[4]

The Basel picture is smaller than the one in Amsterdam and was painted *alla prima*, so it would have preceded the other one. In it Van Gogh tried to record the panorama as faithfully as possible and only permitted himself one topographical liberty: the addition of the Radet mill as a repoussoir. He then embarked on an attempt at a more carefully considered, mature work, for in the Amsterdam painting he was guided not so much by the facts of the view as by their essence. What made the panorama so distinctive was the sight of famous monuments in the distance combined with the view of the fascinating jumble of roofs and chimneys in the foreground, and that was now accentuated in the new painting. Van Gogh consequently enlarged the monuments on the horizon to an unrealistic size and crowded the foreground with those distinctive chimneys and roofs, eliminating the middleground from the scene. In order to enliven the foreground with both colour and form he added groups of trees on the left and right which were probably as fictitious as the houses.[5]

4 For the vantage point see also Drawings 3, p. 84. In theory Van Gogh could have depicted a spot he saw through a telescope or binoculars, on which see the main text.
5 The photograph taken in front of the Blute-fin in 1887 (Paris 1988, p. 46) shows that the only trees were just in front of the mill.



66d Topography of fig. 66b.

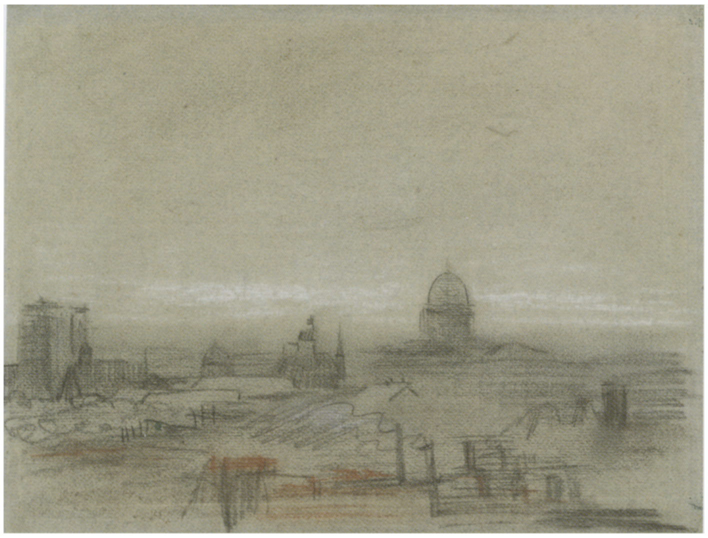


66e Topography of cat. 66.

In order to give shape to his new ideas for the panorama, Van Gogh probably first began making drawings in which he casually practised enlarging the monuments in the distance. He drew Notre-Dame and the Panthéon (fig. 66f), the Hôtel de Ville and the Tour Saint-Jacques (fig. 66g), the Opéra (fig. 66h), and Notre-Dame and the Tour Saint-Jacques (fig. 66i). The buildings are too detailed and large to have looked like that with the naked eye from the hill, which means that Van Gogh must have used the telescope installed by the mill, or binoculars. He could have taken the latter with him, but it is more likely that he used the telescope.[6] In one of the drawings he tried to enlarge the foreground, but both that example, and the enlargement of the monuments on the horizon, show that all these sheets were made after the Basel painting and before the one in the Van Gogh Museum.[7]

As was the case with the landscapes with the stone quarry painted around the same time (cats. 64, 65), Van Gogh used cheap canvas of *étude* quality for this panorama (Table 3.5, no. 28). The ground was applied with the brush after the canvas had been stretched, and it only covers the surface that was to be painted. It is not clear whether Van Gogh did this himself or bought the canvas ready-primed. Alone among the Paris works examined for this catalogue, the priming of this canvas consists of a mixture of lead white and zinc white.[8] Unlike lead white, the latter pigment yields a brittle paint layer, which probably accounts for the many deep stress cracks in the ground. This specific type of ground also resulted in poor adhesion of the layers on top, which led to flaking.

6 It is visible in a photograph of 1880; see Martigny 2000, p. 125.
7 In Drawings 3, p. 83, it was stated that these studies preceded both paintings.
8 In Paris Van Gogh used a mixture of lead white and zinc white to cover scenes that he wanted to reuse (see Table 5). For the problems associated with this zinc white intermediate ground see p. 115.



66f *View of Paris with Notre-Dame and the Panthéon* (F 1387 JH 1098), 1886. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



66g *View of Paris with the Hôtel de Ville and the Tour Saint-Jacques* (F 1388 JH 1095), 1886. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

Like his other works of early 1886, this panorama was executed in a traditional style allied to that of the School of Barbizon. Although nothing could be revealed with infrared reflectography, Van Gogh first prepared the scene with a sketch in a black material. That, at any rate, is what is indicated by the traces of a black pigment seen both on the painting and on the ground in paint cross-sections. On top of that sketch he applied an underpaint in various colours, such as a light and greyish brown in the sky and a bright pink along the horizon on the left, as could be seen from an examination of the paint surface and cross-sections. The pictorial function of this preparation is unclear. Its tones and colours, at any rate, are not directly related to those of the finished painting.

The scene was worked up in a second session with more opaque and bright colours, in the course of which Van Gogh divided it into three horizontal bands: sky, horizon and foreground. The first two have virtually the same palette, in which pinks, blues and purples predominate. Although details were added to the houses with a very dark blue, the foreground looks dark and warm due to the use of greens, orange and ochre. Van Gogh must have felt that the colour and tonal contrasts in the foreground were a little too pronounced, because at the last moment, when this area was completely dry, he applied a loose, highly thinned greenish layer on top consisting of a viridian green mixed with an organic red. This pulled the houses together, while the warm green reinforced the division between the foreground and the cool background.

There is also a sharp contrast between the foreground, with its rather dry paint and short, angular brushstrokes, and the passage on the horizon, which was executed with buttery paint and more delicate strokes. The handling of the paint in the sky is very different from that of the foreground and the horizon. The clouds are suggested with an almost creamy paint layer and wild brushwork, for which Van Gogh used one of his widest brushes (1.5 cm). In this passage, which was painted after the buildings on the horizon, the broad brushstrokes were applied on top of and amongst each other, revealing a complex structure in paint cross-sections amounting to at least six separate layers in places. Van Gogh deliberately alternated between lead white and zinc white in the sky, both pure and mixed. The cool, slightly transparent zinc white was particularly handy in the blue and purple mix-



66h *View of Paris with the Opéra* (F 1390 JH 1097), 1886. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



66i *View of Paris with Notre-Dame and the Tour Saint-Jacques* (F 1389 JH 1096), 1886. Private collection.

tures, while the cream-coloured, opaque lead white was used for the illuminated edges of the clouds. The tough, almost malleable consistency of the lead-white paint was extremely suitable for these impasted strokes applied at the very end (p. 141, fig. 72). Van Gogh had already combined broad strokes with a varied texture of the paint in the sky of his large landscape with the stone quarry in Montmartre (cat. 65), but he employed these effects even more emphatically in this *View of Paris*.

Although some authors have dated both panoramas to the spring of 1886, that is not convincing.[9] Van Gogh's output was still very constrained by the lack of a studio at that time, nor did his ambitions yet extend that far. It is more logical to assume that he only began to get interested in panoramas in June, when the two brothers moved to the larger apartment in rue Lepic, which had a magnificent view from the front (see cat. 95). He immediately made a study of that view with clouds in the sky (fig. 56d), and only then would he have had the idea of painting a true panorama of the city, for which he chose the highest point on the hill of Montmartre: the Blute-fin windmill. Both panoramas are here dated to the early summer of 1886 on the grounds that the palette is quite restrained, not as bright or varied as his flower still lifes and autumnal studies inspired by Monticelli (see cats. 68-71).

9 De la Faille 1970, p. 132, nos. 261, 262, dated both of them to the late summer and autumn of 1886. Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 231, believed that they were painted in the summer, and that was followed for cat. 66 in Amsterdam 1987, p. 327. Hulsker 1996, p. 241, dated them to the spring, which was adopted in Drawings 3, p. 83.

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Bonger 1890, no. 18 [Vue de Paris]?; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 76, vol. 2, pl. LXXII; Bremmer 1930, vol. 4, p. 28, no. 28; De la Faille 1939, p. 202, no. 259; De la Faille 1970, pp. 132, 621; Chetham 1976, pp. 144, 145, ill. 106; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 201, note 18, 231, 241; Hulsker 1977, pp. 238, 241; Hulsker 1980, pp. 238, 241; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 152, 153, 327, no. 1.127; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 86; Sund 1992, pp. 152-55; Hulsker 1996, pp. 238, 241; Lurie 1996, pp. 146, 147; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 53, 66; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 71, 284.

Exhibitions
1892 Amsterdam, no cat.?; 1905 Amsterdam 1, no. 77 [Dfl. 1,200]; 1905 Utrecht, no. 23 [Dfl. 1,200]; 1905 Leiden, no. 23 [Dfl. 1,200]; 1906 Rotterdam, no. 23; 1906 Middelburg, no cat. [Dfl. 1,200]; 1928 Berlin, no. 19; 1928 Vienna, no. 11; 1928 Frankfurt am Main, no. 11; 1928-29 Hanover, Munich & Leipzig, no cat., no. 5, no cat. known; 1929 Utrecht, no. 13 or no. 22 [not for sale]; 1930 Amersfoort, no cat. known; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 21; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1946 Maastricht & Heerlen, no. 33; 1946 Stockholm, Gothenburg & Malmö, no. 22; 1946 Copenhagen, no. 22; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 63; 1952 Enschede, no. 32; 1952 Eindhoven, no. 23; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 73; 1954-55 Bern, no. 18; 1955 Antwerp, no. 177; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 88; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 14; 1956 Leeuwarden, no. 13; 1957 Marseille, no. 26; 1957-58 Leiden & Schiedam, no. 11; 1958 Deventer, no. 9; 1958 Mons, no. 17; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 21; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 15; 1961 Paris, no. 119; 1971-72 Paris, no. 22; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2000-01 London, Amsterdam & Williamstown, unnumbered [only Amsterdam].

67
Flame nettle in a flowerpot

68
Small bottle with peonies and blue delphiniums

69
Glass with yellow roses

67
Paris, late June-mid-July 1886
Oil on canvas
42.1 x 22.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 185 V/1962
F 281 JH 1143

68
Paris, late June-mid-July 1886
Oil on *carton*
35.0 x 27.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 182 V/1962
F 243a JH 1106

Black chalk drawing of a Ferris wheel on the reverse (fig. 67g)
March-June 1886

69
Paris, late June-mid-July 1886
Oil on *carton*
35.0 x 27.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 178 V/1962
F 218 JH 1144

Underlying image: plaster cast after Michelangelo's *Young slave* (fig. 67j)
Mid-June 1886

Van Gogh wanted to continue painting figures after he left Cormon's studio (see cats. 57-63), but a lack of models made that impossible. He had not 'had the opportunity to find models', as he wrote to his sister Willemien a year later [574], and decided instead 'to study the question of colour', probably inspired by Delacroix's *Christ asleep during the tempest* (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art).[1] He did so with the aid of still lifes, and 'painted almost nothing but flowers' [574], thanks to helpful acquaintances, 'from whom he receives a beautiful delivery [...] every week', according to Theo in a letter probably written at the beginning of August.[2]

Van Gogh had little experience of painting flower still lifes. He had made his first cautious forays in the genre in Nuenen,[3] but in Paris he let himself go. In the summer of 1886 he painted between 35 and 40 of them, for which he adopted a traditional approach, not so much in style but in composition.[4] The flowers are all depicted in vases placed almost in the centre of the scene against a neutral background.[5] After the middle of September, however, there were no more flowers to be had, and Van Gogh only started painting them again in the spring of 1887 (see cat. 102). He only produced a few then, but he returned to the genre in the late summer albeit equally briefly (see cat. 124).

Just how much he valued his flower still lifes of 1886 as exercises in colour is apparent from the letter that he wrote to his English colleague Horace Mann Livens in the autumn of that year. 'I have made a series of colour studies in painting simply flowers, red poppies, blue corn flowers and myosotys, white and rose roses, yellow chrysantemums [sic] – seeking oppositions of blue with orange, red & green, yellow and violet, seeking LES TONS ROMPUS ET NEUTRES to harmonise brutal extremes. Trying to render intense COLOUR and not a GREY harmony' [569]. What he did not add was that there was an economic reason for this choice of genre. Flower still lifes had been popular since time immemorial, and as we know that Theo had tried to interest Dutch art dealers in one of Vincent's still lifes on a visit

1 For Van Gogh's decision to concentrate on flower still lifes see pp. 69-72.
2 '[...] hem elke week een mooie bezending'; Theo van Gogh to his mother, undated (b 942), in which he mentions his annual visit to her. It is not known precisely when it took place. She was looking forward to it at the end of July 1886 (b 4173), and Theo travelled back to Paris on 25 August (b 4536), which is why the letter is dated to August. Coyle 2007, p. 299, assumed that the bouquets came from Ernest Quost, a flower painter and friend of Theo's who had a flower garden in Montmartre. Van Gogh noted down his address – 74 rue Rochechouart – in a sketchbook from the beginning of his time in Paris, only a few sheets of which survive (Van der Wolk 1987, p. 143) SB 5/1, no. 145.
3 For his Dutch works in this genre see p. 69, note 71.
4 For a summary see p. 41, note 18.
5 The only exception is F 247 JH 1149, which has a detailed background.



67 Flame nettle in a flowerpot



68 Small bottle with peonies and blue delphiniums



69 Glass with yellow roses



67a *Still life with cornflowers, daisies, poppies and white carnations* (F 324 JH 1293), 1886. Netherlands, Triton Foundation.



67b *Roses and peonies* (F 249 JH 1105), 1886. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.

there in August 1886, it looks as if the latter set out on this exercise with a view to selling the results.[6] He had already come up with the idea of making still lifes as decoration for cafés, and at the beginning of 1887 he succeeded in doing just that with his flower still lifes of 1886,[7] when he exhibited a large number of works in the *Le tambourin* restaurant, which was run by his lover Agostina Segatori (see cat. 102). As far as we know, though, he did not succeed in selling any of them.

When Segatori got into financial difficulties in the summer of 1887, Van Gogh made her a present of the flower still lifes in the exhibition (see cat. 102), which left few examples of the genre in Theo's collection. He regretted his generosity at the beginning of 1888. 'I'll happily exchange Tanguy's flowers for a new study, if he's given up hope of the flowers. The point is that we have hardly any of the flowers left' [640]. We do not know exactly how many flower still lifes remained in Theo's collection at the time, but in 1890 there could not have been many more than around ten.[8] That number was soon reduced even further. Two of them were given to Van Gogh's mother, two to his sister Elisabeth, and one to Hendrik Christiaan Bonger, Jo's eldest brother (cat. 68), although strictly speaking he may have bought it.[9] Another one was sold in 1893 (it is now in Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada), which left just four in the family collection (cats. 67, 69-71).[10] They were rejoined in 1944 by *Small bottle with peonies and blue delphiniums* (cat. 68), which Theo's son inherited that year.[11]

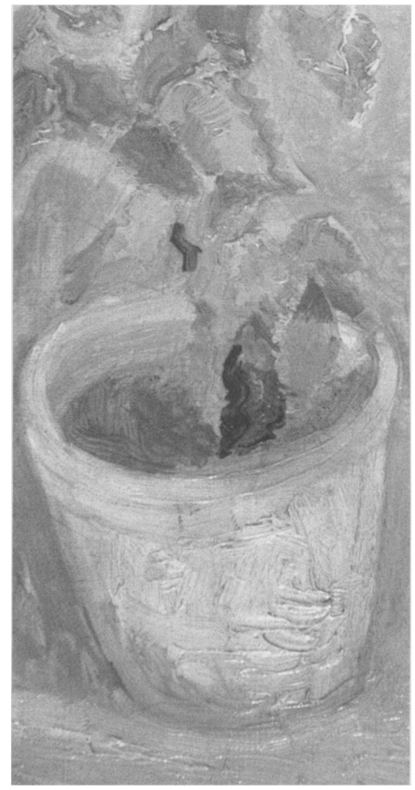
6 On this see letter 568, from which we learn that Theo was unable to sell it but could perhaps exchange it for two watercolours by Eugène Isabey (1803-86). That evidently did not happen, because there are no works of his in the family collection, unless Jo van Gogh-Bonger sold the two watercolours at an early date.
7 On this see cat. 102, letters 546 and 547, and pp. 67-70.
8 This is excluding the flower still lifes from the late summer of 1887. Bonger 1890 lists eight flower pieces from the Paris period (see Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 294, 295): nos. 19 ('Pivoines', F 249 JH 1105, later owned by Vincent's mother); 19bis 'Dahlias (8)', perhaps F 322 JH 1292, later owned by Vincent's sister Elisabeth; 19ter ('Glaieuls', cat. 70); 19^{4} ('Myosotis', possibly cat. 68); 31 ('fleurs dans un pot emaillé', perhaps F 251 JH 1142); 38 ('Roses jaune dans un verre': cat. 69); 43 ('Pot de fleurs', possibly cat. 71); and 48 ('Begonia': cat. 67). Together with F 286 JH 1127, which entered Elisabeth's collection later, one arrives at a total of nine, although there would certainly have been a few more. Works that were given away after 1890 may also have included F 217 JH 1164 and F 324 JH 1293, of which Paul Gachet Sr is the first documented owner. According to De la Faille 1970, p. 620, F 242 JH 1147 also came from Theo's collection, like F 247 JH 1149, but there is no direct evidence for this, which is why they have not been included.
9 F 286 JH 1127, which is from the collection of Vincent's sister Elisabeth, was cautiously doubted by Dorn/Feilchenfeldt 1993, p. 285, but their opinion needs closer examination.
10 The work that was sold was F 251 JH 1142 (Stolwijk/Veenenbos 2002, p. 168).
11 On this see note 15 of cats. 64, 65.



67c *Still life with hollyhocks* (F 235 JH 1136), 1886. Zürich, Kunsthaus Zürich.



67d Adolphe Monticelli, *Still life with flowers*, 1875-77. Lyon, Musée des Beaux-Arts.



67e Detail of infrared reflectogram of cat. 67.

It had always been thought that Van Gogh painted his first flower still lifes in the early spring of 1886 and his last ones in late autumn.[12] According to Welsh-Ovcharov, though, they date from the second half of the year, and this is confirmed by the varieties depicted.[13] Most of them can be identified, so their flowering times are known.[14] The first ones were made in the period June to mid-July and the last ones in August to mid-September.[15] The first period is based on the presence of peonies, poppies and cornflowers (figs. 67a, 67b),[16] and the latter on hollyhocks (fig. 67c), gladioli (cats. 70, 71) and Chinese asters (cats. 70, 71). However, we know that Van Gogh started on his series of plaster casts at the beginning of June (cats. 57-63), and since it is unlikely that he worked on two such different genres at the same time, it can be assumed that he first began exploring flower still lifes in the period late June to mid-July.

Almost the entire series displays the influence of the Provençal artist Adolphe Monticelli (fig. 67d). Van Gogh got to know Monticelli's art in this period, and from his later work he borrowed not just the vivid, sometimes even garish touches of colour but also the use of impasted paints applied with varied, very spontaneous brushwork.[17] He also practised with pronounced chiaroscuro contrasts modelled on Monticelli, who combined glaringly light foregrounds with dark, reddish brown backgrounds. However, this was not slavish imitation. Van Gogh worked in Monticelli's spirit but retained his own taste, as can be seen, for example, from his abun-

12 According to De la Faille 1970, only cat. 102 was painted in the spring of 1886. In his oeuvre catalogue, Hulsker 1977 then grouped several displaced works around this one painting: F 214 JH 1092, F 666 JH 1094, F 244 JH 1093 and F 199 JH 1091. However, they do not belong in that period; see p. 41, note 18.

13 Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 226, 227.

14 The assumption here is that, by and large, Van Gogh painted his flower pieces from life, with only some later additions not being observed from the actual bouquet. This general rule probably does not apply to the tall, decorative works, such as F 286 JH 1127 and F 286a JH 1128, in which the flowers look very schematic and could have been painted after earlier flower pieces.

15 It cannot be ruled out that he stopped earlier, but there is no evidence that he did. All that we know is that he was ill for a while at the end of August (letter of 27 August 1886 from Andries Bonger to his parents, b 1844), but he could have returned to the series after that. It is clear from letter 568 that he was still working on his flower still lifes in the middle of August, at any rate.

16 Poppies and cornflowers recur in F 279 JH 1104, the authenticity of which is doubted by Dorn/Feilchenfeldt 1993, p. 280, but their opinion needs to be examined more closely.

17 Monticelli was a largely forgotten artist who died on 28 June 1886, which was around the time Van Gogh got to know his works. See pp. 70-72, and Aaron Sheon's book on the artist (Pittsburgh etc. 1978-79).

dant use of blue backgrounds, which are not found in Monticelli's oeuvre but are common in Van Gogh's (see cats. 57-63).[18] The Provençal artist also worked mainly on panel, but Van Gogh did not follow that example.

Monticelli's influence is not apparent in *Flame nettle in a flowerpot* (cat. 67), which is why we are assuming that this elongated, vertical work was one of Van Gogh's earliest still lifes from the summer of 1886, and possibly even the very first one.[19] In order to capture the tall, narrow plant properly he chose a canvas which almost precisely matched the size of a *marine* 6 (41 x 24 cm) or a *basse marine* 6 (40.5 x 21.5 cm) (Table 3.5, no. 48). It is not just the absence of Monticelli-like stylistic effects that argues for an early date in the series, but also the choice of such a small canvas.

As with his later still lifes, Van Gogh studied 'the question of colour' in this painting [574], although he was still relying on his old manner, as shown by the basketwork pattern in the background and the descriptive brushwork in the leaves, for example, which closely resemble those in the studies of plaster casts that he had just been making (cats. 57-63). There is also an abundance of complementary colour contrasts: a blue background with leaves edged with orange, green against red in the leaf, and a purplish shadow by the yellow of the flowerpot and the table. The eye is also caught by the transparent, deep red in the plant, for which Van Gogh used the relatively stable organic red pigment Kopp's purpurin (see Table 7).

Van Gogh indicated the positions of the plant and pot on the pale pink ground with sharp schematic lines that have been revealed by infrared reflectography (fig. 67e),[20] after which he drew the detailed outlines of the leaves, probably with charcoal. He followed that sketch very faithfully in the paint, only modifying it to place the flowerpot a little higher up and a touch further to the right, making the composition less rigidly symmetrical. No traces of any underdrawings have been found beneath the other flower still lifes, which suggests that Van Gogh was still not entirely at his ease with the subject in this painting. This is yet another argument for placing it early in the series.

The paint was largely applied wet-into-wet; only the bright blue basketwork pattern in the background was added when the rest of the scene was dry. Van Gogh was now looking for a more forceful blue than the one in the backgrounds of his studies of plaster casts, for all of which he used the inexpensive Prussian blue, sometimes mixed with French ultramarine. To this end he first applied a layer of French ultramarine, with expensive cobalt blue on top for the very last, bright touches (p. 126, fig. 53).

Flame nettle in a flowerpot was followed by *Small bottle with peonies and blue delphiniums* (cat. 68) and *Glass with yellow roses* (cat. 69). The latter two are the only paintings in the series on commercially prepared *carton*, but unlike cat. 67 Monticelli's influence is now very evident. We have given them the same early date of late June to mid-July because of the cheap support and small size: the standard *figure* 5.[21] They are unpretentious studies, so Van Gogh did not take much care over them. The impasto in both has been flattened as a result of other works being pressed up against them, leaving traces of paint and fibres behind in the paint surface. There are also many fingerprints at the edges which show that Van Gogh did not always keep his nails short (fig. 67f). The paint layer is damaged at

18 Most of the surviving works have red, red-brown, bluish or blackish backgrounds. However, it is known from letter 568, which was probably written at the beginning of August, that he had also painted still lifes with a yellowish background, but they have not survived.

19 Both De la Faille 1970 and Hulsker 1996 date this work to the late summer. It is wrongly not included in Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, and was given the incorrect title of '[blad]Bégonia' (*Rex begonia*) in the 1890 inventory of Theo's collection (Bonger 1890, no. 48; see also Amsterdam 1905, no. 87). It was correctly described as 'Plante de coléus' in De la Faille 1928.

20 The paint surface was also examined with a stereomicroscope for this purpose.

21 De la Faille 1970, Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 227; Hulsker 1996; and Amsterdam 1987 all dated this work to the summer. Roses flower from the end of May until deep into the autumn.

67f Detail of cat. 68 showing Van Gogh's fingerprints in the fresh paint.





67h Detail of cat. 68, showing multi-coloured brushwork.

67g The reverse of cat. 68.





67i Detail of cat. 68 showing discoloured red lake.

many points due to this frequent handling, which sometimes left paint sticking to the artist's fingers.

Interestingly, *Small bottle with peonies and blue delphiniums* is one of the few *carton* supports in the family collection that was not given a backing support by the restorer J.C. Traas. The original reverse is thus visible (fig. 67g), together with the sticker of the supplier, the colourman Pignel-Dupont, whose shop was at 17 rue Lepic. The price of 50 centimes is marked on the sticker. Van Gogh had bought the *carton* supports for his view of the roofs from the apartment window (cat. 56) and the studies of plaster casts of early June (cats. 57-59, 61-63) from the same shop, and since the grounds of those works and of *Small bottle with peonies and blue delphiniums* and *Glass with yellow roses* (cat. 69) are identical, the latter *carton* support must have been bought in that shop as well (see Table 2).

Van Gogh made a sketch on the back of *Small bottle with peonies and blue delphiniums* (cat. 68), probably in black chalk (fig. 67g). It is of two couples seated in a fairground Ferris wheel, and shows that he had taken the piece of *carton* with him on one of his many walks through the city, probably before painting the still life on the other side.[22] The drawing is partly hidden by a sticker of the Dutch art dealers Buffa en Zonen that was applied in February-March 1892, when the firm's Amsterdam branch had reluctantly agreed to exhibit ten of Van Gogh's works.[23] It was held at the same time as an exhibition in Rotterdam. Between them they were the first Van Gogh exhibition to be held in the Netherlands, and according to a reviewer the works on display included 'flowers that are not without charm'.[24]

The flowers in cat. 68 are white peonies and what look like garden carnations – the variety with dark red and white stripes. The three blue flowers with pointed petals on the right are delphiniums.[25] Peonies finish flowering around mid-July, so the painting must have been made before then.[26]

22 It is impossible to identify the location, and the style of the drawing is too sketchy for it to be datable.
23 It was decided to go ahead with the exhibition at the urging of the critic Joseph Jacob Isaacson (1859-1942) and others; see Han van Crimpen, 'Johanna van Gogh, a legacy', in Kōdera 1993, pp. 358, 359.
24 Anonymous, 'Vincent van Gogh', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 16 February 1892 ('bloemen niet zonder charme'). Other works in the show were 'a city scene kept in tone with great distinction' ('een stadgezicht met veel distinctie in den toon gehouden') and 'a field of reeds that really sway' ('een veld met riet dat werkelijk wuift'), which might be cats. 66 and 110, in other words Paris canvases, like cat. 68.
25 It was thought for a long time that the flowers were myosotis (forget-me-nots), as first suggested in De la Faille 1928.
26 De la Faille 1970 dated this painting to June 1886. That was then extended to the summer of that year in both Welsh-Ovcharov 1976 and Hulsker 1977.



67j X-radiography of cat. 69.

Van Gogh applied an airy, streaky brown on top of the ground (p. 140, fig. 71). That underlayer appears to be limited to the bottom half of the composition, and was not fully dry when Van Gogh started on the still life. This kind of underpaint is unusual in his flower pieces, but one does find a local tonal preparation in his *plein-air* landscapes (cats. 64, 65). Since we know that he took the *carton* with him on one of his forays into Paris, it very much looks as if this underlayer was applied in preparation for a landscape. In the end the *carton* was not used for that purpose, and the brown layer came in very handy for the opening and lower part of the bottle.

Like *Flame nettle in a flowerpot*, this painting is a study in complementary contrasts, with green beside red and blue beside orange, in the table, for example. Much of the work was executed wet-into-wet. After painting the greenish-blue background, in which reserves were left for the bottle and the largest flowers in the bouquet, Van Gogh worked alternately on the background, the flowers and the bottle. The delphiniums were added at a late stage, for their flowers extended over the wet but completely finished background.

Small bottle with peonies and blue delphiniums (cat. 68) was painted in a lively manner inspired by Monticelli. Van Gogh used viscous paint of almost chewing-gum consistency for the stems and leaves. The most pronounced impasto was reserved for the blooms and the highest lights on the table. Buttery strokes of white, red and blue were first intermingled in the large blooms before being mixed into each other to create striking 'marbled' brushstrokes (fig. 67h) in which it is not entirely clear which strokes belong to the blooms and which to the background. So here one finds Van Gogh's search for the effect of colour contrasts expressed at the level of the single brushstroke, and that was a device he continued using in the still lifes that followed (cats. 70, 71). He waited until his heavy impasto was good and dry so as not to disturb it, and only then applied strokes of red glaze consisting of Kopp's purpurin and redwood by the blooms and the bottle (see p. 136, figs. 61-63). He used thick paint that even began to drip here and there among the leaves. The pigment discoloured to brown under the influence of light, as can be seen in the bottle and foreground (fig. 67i).

Van Gogh used an earlier painting that was evidently a failure as the support for his *Glass with yellow roses* (cat. 69). As can be seen from the X-radiograph, it was a study after the plaster cast of Michelangelo's *Young slave* (fig. 67j), one of his still lifes with casts from the first half of June 1886 (cats. 57-63).[27] The table in the underlying scene has an equally odd curved shape as that in one of his studies of a torso of Venus (cat. 60). The heavily impasted rendering of the cast and the number of layers in the background show that the painting was in a very advanced stage, and might even have been finished, when Van Gogh painted the flower still life on top. He did not scrape it off or cover it with a layer of paint, with the result that the bright blue of the background is clearly visible in small spots of paint loss and in drying cracks in the paint film. It was only in the background that he did his best to eliminate the underlying blue by applying the dark brown paint extremely thickly.

This dark layer composed of a complex mixture of pigments served as the base for a bright, organic red glaze, the refined warm glow of which is typical of the dark brown background in Monticelli's still lifes (p. 114, fig. 32, p. 137, fig. 64).[28] This is an unusual method, because a transparent red glaze is seen to its best effect on

27 Van Heugten 1995, p. 77, no. 12.
28 Monticelli achieved this effect in a very different way by painting on wood that was usually unprimed, which was then allowed to play a part in the colouring of background.

a light-coloured underlayer. Van Gogh painted the glass and the flowers before adding this bright red, because a glaze of that kind can only be applied to a completely dry underpaint. Their shapes were roughly reserved in the dark brown of the background, and the paint along the contours is mixed a little with the background, which was still wet.

Van Gogh once again followed Monticelli's example by opting for a rather busy and varied impasto. As in *Small bottle with peonies and blue delphiniums* he used a viscous, stringy paint that was drawn into fine, twisting tendrils of colour, and he chose a basketwork pattern for the background. That is due in part to the texture of the underlying blue background, but he heightened that effect. The same brushwork can be seen in the table, although there Van Gogh used a slightly finer brush.

Cat. 67

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
Bonger 1890, no. 48 [Begonia]; Bremmer 1926, vol. II, pp. 81, 82, no. 81; De la Faille 1928, vol. I, p. 82, vol. 2, pl. LXXVIII; De la Faille 1939, p. 242, no. 324; Tralbaut 1955 I, p. 36; De la Faille 1970, pp. 140, 622; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 122, 123, note 30; Hulsker 1977, p. 250; Hulsker 1980, p. 250; Amsterdam 1987, p. 327, no. I.126; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 86; Hulsker 1996, p. 250; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 116, 124, 127, 128; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 49, 68; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 48, 285, 307.

EXHIBITIONS
1892 Rotterdam, no cat. known [for sale]; 1905 Amsterdam I, no. 87 [Dfl. 350]; 1908 Berlin II, no cat. known [Dfl. 800]; 1910 Leiden, no cat. known; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 45; 1930 London, no. 9; 1932 Cologne, no cat. known; 1932 Manchester, no. 31; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 69.

Cat. 68

PROVENANCE
1886-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-? J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; ?-1929 H.C. Bonger, Amsterdam; 1929-44 E.H. Bonger, Amsterdam; 1944-52 V.W. van Gogh; 1952-60 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1960-62 Theo van Gogh Foundation; 1962 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1962-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

LITERATURE
Bonger 1890, no. 19[4], [Myosotis (8)]?; De la Faille 1928, vol. I, p. 72, vol. 2, pl. LXV [as 243bis]; De la Faille 1939, p. 250, no. 337 [F 243bis]; De la Faille 1970, pp. 124, 621; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 227; Hulsker 1977, p. 242; Hulsker 1980, p. 242; Amsterdam 1987, p. 327, no. I.122; Hulsker 1996, p. 242; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 117, 124, 128, 129, 131; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 45, 47, 73, notes 33, 36; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 48, 284.

EXHIBITIONS
1892 Amsterdam, no cat.?; 1948 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 56; 1957-58 Stockholm, no. 105, Luleå, Kiruna, Umeå, Östersund, Sandviken & Gothenburg, no cat. known; 1960 Cuesmes, no. 6; 2003 Tokyo, no. 20; 2004-05 Humlebæk & Riehen, nos. 132 and 48 respectively; 2007 Stockholm, no. 106.

Cat. 69

PROVENANCE
1886-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1917-19 on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1962 Vincent van Gogh Foundation (ratified in 1982); 1962-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

LITERATURE
Bonger 1890, no. 38 [Roses jaunes dans un verre]; De la Faille 1928, vol. I, p. 66, vol. 2, pl. LXI; De la Faille 1939, p. 254, no. 344; De la Faille 1970, pp. 116, 620; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 78, 227; Hulsker 1977, p. 250; Hulsker 1980, p. 250; Amsterdam 1987, p. 327, no. I.123; Van Heugten 1995, p. 77, no. 12; Hulsker 1996, p. 250; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 116, 124, 127-30, 132; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 47, 73, note 36; Coyle 2007, p. 303; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 47, 285.

EXHIBITIONS
None.

70
Vase with gladioli and Chinese asters

71
Vase with Chinese asters and gladioli

70
Paris, August-mid-September 1886
Oil on canvas
46.5 x 38.4 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 144 V/1962
F 248a JH 1148

71
Paris, August-mid-September 1886
Oil on canvas
61.1 x 46.1 cm
Signed at lower left in blue: Vincent
Inv. s 177 V/1962
F 234 JH 1168

These two flower still lifes are more pretentious than the preceding three (cats. 67-69). For a start they are larger, and were painted later that summer, when Van Gogh undoubtedly felt more at home in the genre. The flowers in each are the same. One consists mostly of gladioli with a few Chinese asters at bottom right (cat. 70). They are shown at their very best, with the exception of a single stalk, but that is not the case with the other work (cat. 71), which is mainly of Chinese asters with a few wilted yellow flowers at top right which are probably gladioli. It is an older bouquet with several broken stems and asters that have fallen off and are rotting away.[1]

Vase with gladioli and Chinese asters (cat. 70) is first documented in the 1890 inventory of Theo's collection, where it is simply called 'Glaieuls'.[2] In 1905 it was selected for the major retrospective exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, and in 1917-19 it was exhibited in the Rijksmuseum (fig. 70a), but oddly enough De la Faille overlooked it in both the first and second editions of his oeuvre catalogue.[3] With its publication in the revised edition of 1970 it was dated to the late summer of 1886, and that has been retained here. Chinese asters and gladioli flower from August to mid-September.[4]

The *figure* 8 canvas (Table 3.5, no. 30) is in light, bright colours with an abundance of complementary contrasts: blue against orange, red against green and violet against yellow. In common with other still lifes there are brushstrokes that combine contrasting colours. Van Gogh used cobalt blue for the background, as he had done in *Small bottle with peonies and blue delphiniums* (cat. 68). The two kinds of organic red in the red and pink flowers – cochineal on a calcium substrate and Kopp's purpurin – are both relatively stable and seem to have retained their colour well (p. 107, fig. 18). Van Gogh made skilful use of the pink colour of the ground, which contains lead white tinted with a little umber and orange ochre pigment, at various points in the composition, such as the vase, right next to the highlight, and in the pale pink gladioli. That colour of the ground is echoed in the final touches on the pink tips of the gladioli.

Most of the bouquet was loosely reserved in the first lay-in of the background. This suggests that Van Gogh sketched his composition on the ground, but no such traces can be seen on the painted surface or with infrared reflectography. He painted the vase and the bouquet after the background had been filled in, working on each alternately, and many of the contours of the flowers are mixed with the blue. He then moved on to the table, where he immediately indicated the fallen stalks. It may have been then that he added the striking yellow gladiolus, which

1 The work is probably listed as 'Dahlia's', in Amsterdam 1905, no. 64, and that painting was then shown in an exhibition in Munich in 1909 (no. 6). Jo van Gogh-Bonger used the number 64 in two lists (b 2204 and b 2201), but confusingly she gave two different titles, speaking of 'dahlias in a vase' ('dahlia's in een vaas'; b 2201, no. 49), and of 'asters in a vase' ('asters in een vaas'; b 2204, no. 58). Since she added the information in the latter case that it hung in her dining room, it was evidently cat. 71, which had a permanent place there (see the entry and fig. 70d). De la Faille 1928 described the flowers as asters, to which phlox were added in the 1970 edition. It was called *Thistles and wild carnations* in New York 1940, no. 13, and in the subsequent venues of that exhibition.
2 Bonger 1890, no. 19ter.
3 Contrary to what is said in De la Faille 1970, we know that it was exhibited in Amsterdam in 1905 under no. 80 as *Gladioli* thanks to A.T., 'Tentoonstelling Vincent van Gogh', *Wereldkroniek* 1906, p. 739. A photograph of it was reproduced in that review, whereas De la Faille 1970 believed that F 247 JH 1149 was in that show. See Heijbroek 1991, pp. 202, 207, fig. 48, for the photograph and the loan in 1917-19.
4 De la Faille 1970, Welsh-Ovcharov 1976 and Hulsker 1996 all dated it to the late summer. However, Alan Bowness in London 1968-69, no. 66, p. 61, felt that it should be placed early in the series because of the 'impasto and residual Dutch colours'.



70 Vase with gladioli and Chinese asters



71 Vase with Chinese asters and gladioli



70a Arrangement of Jo van Gogh-Bonger's loans to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, c. 1918. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



70b Nineteenth-century vase belonging to Theo and Vincent. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

was painted in its entirety over the blue of the background, which was still wet at the time.

Most of the scene was painted wet-into-wet, seemingly in a single session, with buttery paints that were applied with a marked impasto, mainly in the illuminated part of the vase and the flowers (p. 146, fig. 1). Van Gogh added thick white strokes to the dark purplish-grey of the table by the red gladiolus in the right foreground, where they supply a luminous basis for the orange and red shades of the flowers. He waited until the painting was largely dry before adding those colour accents so as not to disrupt the impasto. The same applies to the light purple to grey strokes in the pale gladioli and in the asters, as well as the light and darker blue touches at top right in the background.

The flowers in *Vase with Chinese asters and gladioli* (cat. 71) are in a simple 19th-century earthenware vase decorated with slip trailing that has been preserved in the family collection (fig. 70b).[5] It features in many of Van Gogh's still lifes, so it may have been the brothers' favourite.[6] Jo van Gogh-Bonger later installed it on a cupboard in her living room (fig. 70c).

It took Van Gogh several sessions to paint this work, which has the same kind of flowers as the previous one and would thus date from the late summer as well.[7] He manipulated the colour tone and composition far more than he did in his small studies. The opening in the vase is fairly small in reality, and the bouquet would never have fitted into it, which shows that the composition is partly imaginary. Van Gogh chose a standard *paysage* 12 canvas (Table 3.5, no. 42), so the scene is a little larger than the other still life with gladioli and asters (cat. 70). He was proud of the result, although the bouquet contains rotting blooms and would not have been to the taste of every lover of flower still lifes.[8] Unlike the preceding works (cats. 67-70) it was signed, on the left, while the paint was still wet. It remained in the family collection and Jo later had it in her dining room, to the right of the cupboard above which *The harvest* hung (fig. 70d).[9]

5 With thanks to Jan-Daan van Dam (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum).
6 In addition to cat. 71, the vase is depicted in F 235 JH 1136, F 236 JH 1130, F 237 JH 1131, F 248b JH 1150, F324a JH 1137, and perhaps F 596 JH 1135 as well.
7 For the dating see De la Faille 1970, which was adopted by Welsh-Ovcharov 1976 and Hulsker 1996.
8 It is difficult to say whether Van Gogh deliberately chose a bouquet that was already past its best. That is certainly what he did for his later still lifes with sunflowers, for which see cat. 124.
9 This is also stated in a letter of 1926 from Willem Steenhoff to Vincent Willem van Gogh (b 5617).



70c Photograph of Jo van Gogh-Bonger, her second husband Johan Cohen Gosschalk and her son Vincent Willem in the dining room of their home at Koninginneweg 77 in Amsterdam, c. 1905. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



70d Photograph of the dining and drawing rooms of Jo van Gogh-Bonger's apartment at Koninginneweg 77, c. 1915. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

The vase and the background were first painted in warm, bright colours on the commercially prepared, pale pink, lead-white ground – the vase in orange-red and brown, the background in yellow-brown, pink and bright organic red. Van Gogh reserved the central flowers in the background and then painted them directly on the ground. The flowers around the edges, however, were placed on the underlayer while it was still wet, because it was handier not to reserve each of those blooms separately. In addition, in order to create a lively effect he could only decide on their final positions after painting the core of the bouquet. He avoided a rigid symmetry by positioning the vase a little to the right of centre.

The background was worked up with strokes of grey and subdued red applied in a basketwork pattern directly in the wet underlayer after the flowers had been painted. This considerably weakened the background, which had initially been so warm and bright. The vase, too, was worked up with cooler and more muted colours, dark brown and purplish grey, which were also applied to the wet underlayer. The drooping pale pink aster was then added for compositional reasons, and was painted immediately on top of the vase while it was still wet.[10]

Van Gogh had worked up the table with pink and light blue in the first painting session, at which point the salmon-coloured blooms on the right had probably already been indicated. In the second session, though, he altered the foreground and painted over the table, once again in pink and light blue, but with a different distribution of the colours and different paints (p. 126, fig. 52). He then placed the blooms in front of and to the left of the vase on this wet layer.

10 There is a similar drooping aster in F 248b JH 1150 and cat. 70, which confirms the suspicion that this was more of a stock device than a realistic detail.

He later made a second, equally radical alteration by applying the strikingly deep shadow around the vase and the bouquet (p. 147, fig. 2), which covered some 4 cm of the table top on the left, as well as a red flower that was lying there. He then reinstated the flower, but a little lower down. These changes resulted in a less symmetrical composition, because the table then jutted forward. He accentuated that even further by reinforcing the edge of the table to the left of the vase with a black line while keeping the transition on the right deliberately vague.

The paint of the table was still not entirely dry when the deep shadow was added, which is probably why that darker paint contains numerous drying cracks. Moreover, the paint of the second session did not adhere properly to that of the first one and has flaked off in many places. Those areas of damage must soon have manifested themselves. Van Gogh probably retouched the paint loss in the heart of the red flower himself; the blackish paint he used is very similar to that in the shadow around the vase. He was evidently not bothered by the difference in colour from the underlying layer in the table. He then abandoned attempts to camouflage the areas of paint loss, such as above the letters 'e' and 'n' of his signature.

Like the preceding three works, this painting is multicoloured. There are bright shadows of pink, red, blue-yellow and green, while the dark vase stands out dramatically against the even deeper shadows around the bouquet. The two kinds of red lake in the flowers and the background contribute to the rich colouring. Van Gogh used so-called marbled brushstrokes, as he had done in *Small bottle with peonies and blue delphiniums* and *Glass with yellow roses* (cats. 68, 69). They incorporated contrasting colours and were used in the asters, where the edge of each stroke of buttery paint is pushed up in a little ridge.

Cat. 70

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Bonger 1890, no. 19[ter] [Glaieuls (8)]; not in De la Faille 1928; not in De la Faille 1939; De la Faille 1970, pp. 126, 127, 621; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 122, 123, note 30, 228; Hulsker 1977, p. 251; Hulsker 1980, p. 251; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 160, 161, 327, no. 1.125; Heijbroek 1991, p. 207, ill. 49; Coyle 1996, p. 122; Hulsker 1996, pp. 250, 251; Tokyo 1996, pp. 58, 59, 140, 141, no. 7; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 114, 117, 124, 129; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 66; Coyle 2007, pp. 289, 291; Seoul 2007-08, pp. 244, 245; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 49, 284.

Exhibitions
1905 Amsterdam I, no. 80 [not for sale]; 1905 Utrecht, no. 24 [not for sale]; 1905 Leiden, no. 24 [not for sale]; 1906 Rotterdam, no. 24; 1906 Middelburg, no cat.; 1908 Berlin II, no cat. known [Dfl. 1,800]; 1909 Rotterdam, no. 31; 1911 Amsterdam, no. 13 [not for sale]; 1913 The Hague, no. 72; 1929 Utrecht, no. 11? [not for sale]; 1930 Amersfoort, no cat. known; 1948 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 68; 1952 London, no. 7; 1954 Zürich, no. 32; 1954-55 Bern, no. 30; 1955 Antwerp, no. 166; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 80; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 13; 1957 Breda, no. 37; 1957 Marseille, no. 22; 1957-58 Leiden & Schiedam, no. 9; 1958 Mons, no. 9; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 32; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 13; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 17; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 17; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 20; 1968-69 London, no. 67; 1971-72 Paris, no. 19; 1972 Bordeaux, no. 6; 1990 Osaka, Tokyo & Sydney, no. 77; 1996 Tokyo, no. 7; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2000-01 London, Amsterdam & Williamstown, unnumbered [only Amsterdam]; 2003 Tokyo, no. 24; 2005 Tokyo, Osaka & Nagoya, no. 44; 2007-08 Seoul, unnumbered; 2008 Amsterdam, no cat.

Cat. 71

Provenance
1886-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1917-19 on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam?; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1962 Vincent van Gogh Foundation (ratified in 1982); 1962-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Literature
Bonger 1890, no. 43 [Pot de fleurs]; De la Faille 1928, vol. I, pp. 69, 70, vol. 2, pl. LXI; De la Faille 1939, p. 228, no. 300; Tralbaut 1955 I, p. 35; London 1968-69, p. 60, no. 66; De la Faille 1970, pp. 122, 123, 620; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 122, note 28, 227; Hulsker 1977, pp. 254, 255; Hulsker 1980, pp. 254, 255; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 158, 159, 327, no. 1.124; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 84; Rome 1988, no. 22; Essen/Amsterdam 1990-91, pp. 78, 79, no. 8; Coyle 1996, p. 122; Hulsker 1996, pp. 252, 254, 255; Amsterdam 2003, p. 263, no. 128; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 117, 124, 127-30;

Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 51, 67; Coyle 2007, pp. 288, 289, 291; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 51, 285; Letters 2009, letter 771, note 1.

Exhibitions

1905 Amsterdam I, no. 64 [Dfl. 900]; 1909-10 Munich, no. 6, Frankfurt am Main, Dresden & Chemnitz, no cat. known (not for sale); 1910 Leiden, no cat. known; 1911 Amsterdam, no. 10 [not for sale]; 1914 Antwerp, no. 21; 1914 Berlin, no. 18; 1914 Cologne & Hamburg, no cat. known; 1926 Munich, no. 2069 (not for sale); 1928-29 Hanover, Munich & Leipzig, no cat., no. 3, no cat. known; 1930 London, no. 5?; 1932 Cologne, no cat. known; 1932 Manchester, no. 6; 1938-39 Batavia, no. 38; 1939 Surabaya, no. 3; 1939 Bandung, no cat.; 1939 San Francisco, no. 170; 1940 Cleveland, no. 20; 1940 Cambridge & New Haven, no cat.; 1940 New York, no. 13; 1941 Chapel Hill, no cat.; 1941 Boston, no cat. known; 1941 Spokane, no. 3; 1942 Dayton, unnumbered; 1942 Baltimore & Worcester, no. 6; 1942 Providence, no cat. known; 1943 Albany, Pittsburgh & Toledo, no. 2.G; 1943 Northampton, Philadelphia & Montgomery, no cat. known, no. 2.G; 1943 Saint Louis, no. 2.G; 1943 Springfield, no cat. known; 1943 New York, no. 8; 1943-44 Indianapolis, Cincinnati & Ottawa, no. 2.G; 1944 Montreal, no. 117; 1944 Fort Wayne, no. 2.G; 1944 New York, no. 2.G; 1944 Richmond, no cat.; 1944 Charleston, no. 2.G; 1944 Atlanta, no cat. known; 1945 New Orleans, Louisville & Syracuse, no cat. known, no. 2.G, no cat.; 1945 Toronto & Quebec, no cat. known, no. unknown; 1945 New York, no cat.; 1945 Norwich, no. 2.G.; 1947 Groningen, no. 31; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 55; 1952 Enschede, no. 18; 1952 Eindhoven, no. 17; 1953 Zundert, no. 12; 1953 Hoensbroek, no. 25; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 65; 1954 Zürich, no. 15; 1954-55 Bern, no. 26; 1955 Antwerp, no. 164; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 78; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 12; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 19; 1968-69 London, no. 66; 1969-70 Los Angeles, Saint Louis & Philadelphia, no. 13; 1970-71 Baltimore, San Francisco & New York, no. 13; 1971-72 Paris, no. 17; 1972 Bordeaux, no. 5; 1988 Rome, no. 22; 1990-91 Essen & Amsterdam, nos. 8 and 7 respectively; 1997 Venice, no. 21; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 20; 2003 Amsterdam I, no. 128; 2003 Amsterdam II, unnumbered.

72
Prawns and mussels

Paris, September-November 1886
Oil on canvas
26.5 x 34.8 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 122 V/1962
F 256 JH 1169

This small study is a charming portrait of six prawns and nine mussels on bladder-wrack, the traditional packing material for shellfish. It was an unusual subject for Van Gogh, and probably presented itself by sheer chance. After moving to rue Lepic in June 1886 the two brothers had taken on 'an excellent kitchen-maid', and it is likely that Vincent, looking for an excuse to paint something, had come across what she had bought for their supper at the fishmonger's.[1]

Although he had no experience with the subject at all, he did capture the prawns with their long antennae and the deep blue mussels convincingly.[2] The scene was painted remarkably quickly and confidently, and as such has much in common with *Café terrace in Montmartre (La guinguette)* (fig. 72a). That work dates from the autumn of 1886, and the still life would be from the same period.[3] Van Gogh set up a clever interplay between the complementary contrasts of red and green, blue and orange. There is a comparable use of colour in *Mackerel, tomatoes and lemons* of about the same date (fig. 72b),[4] as well as a distinct similarity to the flower still lifes of the summer of 1886, which were inspired by Monticelli (see cats. 69, 71) and to which he often gave dark backgrounds in imitation of the Provençal artist. He clearly still felt the need to practise colouring and brushwork, but since there were no more cut flowers available he had to turn to other subjects.

Van Gogh used a cheap, loosely woven canvas that had been commercially primed with a pale pink ground (Table 3.5, no. 43). He first applied a streaky, transparent layer that now looks ochre (p. 147, fig. 5). However, a paint cross-section shows that it does not contain any pigment at all but consists solely of binding medium, which tells us that the present colour must be the result of yellowing.[5] That intermediate layer was still wet when Van Gogh began painting, from which it can be concluded that it is an oiling-out layer, and since his brushstrokes spread easily on it he regarded the work as an experiment in direct, accurate painting.[6] He may have done this in imitation of Monticelli, who later used wooden panels coated with a layer of varnish to achieve the same sort of effect.[7]

The scene was painted very rapidly in a single session, wet-into-wet. Van Gogh started by outlining the positions of the mussels and prawns with thick, dark lines of paint. He then coloured in those passages. Only the prawn on the left was painted over the background. The brushwork is very loose, and the buttery consis-

1 The quotation is from a letter of 23 June 1886 (b 1843) from Andries Bonger to his parents: '[...] keukenmeid in optima forma'.

2 The subject is related to that of three fish still lifes, one of which – F 285 JH 1118 (fig. 72b) – recalls Van Gogh's style of the autumn of 1886 in certain respects (but see note 4 below). The thinned technique of the other two, F 203 JH 1123 and F 283 JH 1120, suggests they were painted in the winter of 1886-87. Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 236, doubted the authenticity of F 283a JH 1660, F 283b JH 1230 and F 1671 JH 1122, and Hulsker 1996, p. 381, actually placed F 283a JH 1660 in the Arles period; see further Appendix 2.

3 De la Faille 1970, p. 131, believed that the painting was made in the autumn of 1886, and he was followed in this by Hulsker 1996, p. 255. Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 229, suggested the autumn and early winter of 1886-87, whereupon the editors of the Van Gogh Museum's collection catalogue extended that to the entire winter (Amsterdam 1987, p. 328).

4 Doubt was cast on the authenticity of this painting (see Roland Dorn's contribution to Winterthur 2002-03, pp. 538-41), but in our opinion that view needs closer examination.

5 Even assuming that the layer on the painting contains very little pigment and that it was simply not incorporated at this particular sampling spot, the yellow must be largely due to the binding medium, which predominates.

6 A so-called oiling-out layer, a light coating of oil or oil and varnish, was traditionally applied between the various stages of the painting process. Though that was not the case here, its purpose matched one of those described for such a layer, namely 'To facilitate [...] fresh colours to glide freely over the surface', as J.F.L. Mérimée put it in his *De la peinture de l'huile* of 1830, for which see Carlyle 2001, pp. 213, 214, quoting this English translation of 1839. This technique has not been seen in any other painting by Van Gogh. A comparable intermediate layer was found in *Small bottle with peonies and blue delphiniums* (cat. 68), but there it was pigmented and served solely to give the light-coloured priming a darker tone.

7 Kind communication from Jo Kirby, formerly of the National Gallery, London, Scientific Department.



72 Prawns and mussels



72a *Café terrace in Montmartre (La guinguette)* (F 238 JH 1178), 1886. Paris, Musée d'Orsay.

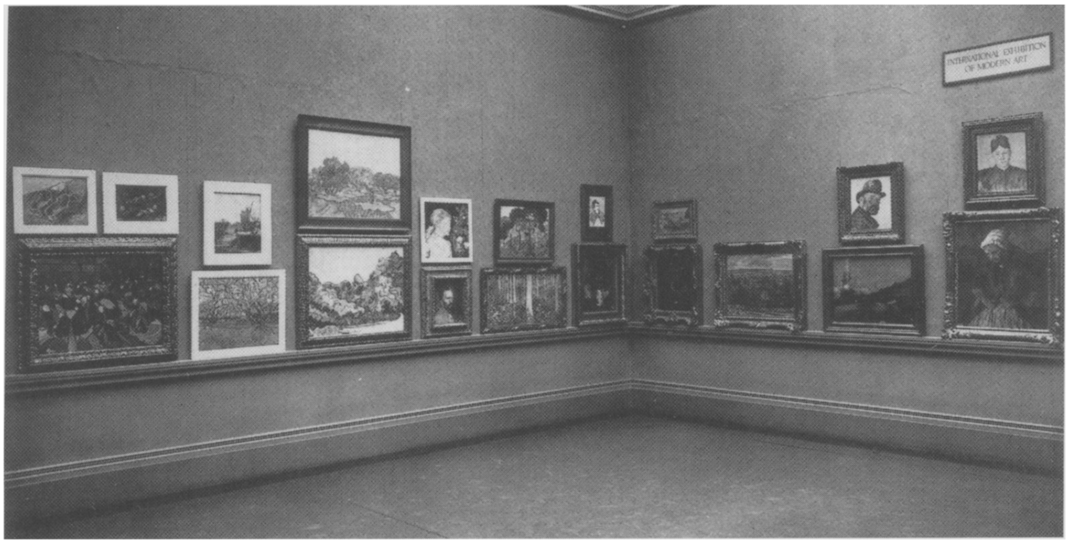


72b *Mackerel, tomatoes and lemons* (F 285 JH 1118), 1886. Winterthur, Oskar Reinhart 'Am Römerholz' Collection.

tency of the paint combined with the varied brushwork was used to model the forms, particularly by the prawns. He abandoned his old palette of earth colours for the dark, subdued tints, choosing instead mixtures of bright pigments, among them cadmium yellow and viridian green. The fairly large vertical area of damage to the left of centre is of an early date, and can be seen in a photograph of around 1908.[8]

Although the still life is small, Paul Gauguin was impressed by Van Gogh's achievement. In one of his 'literary' pieces about his relationship with the Dutchman, anyway, he described a study which immediately recalls *Prawns and mussels*: 'a still life of prawns, as pink as a girl's arse, on pink paper'.[9] He said that he had seen the painting on sale for 5 francs at an art dealer's, but since there are no other known still lifes of prawns by Van Gogh, and because his description of the support is wrong but perfectly understandable, he would have been referring to this study,

8 Inv. no. p 685; see also Druet 1920, no. 40702.
9 In the manuscript of the second volume of *Portraits du prochain siècle*, which was never published (Paris, Hôtel Drouot, 21 December 1991, lot 9): '[...] une nature morte: des crevettes roses comme le cul d'un môme sur un papier rose'.



72c Photograph of room 52 in the Armory Show in The Art Institute of Chicago, 1913. Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago, Archives, with cat. 72 as the second small painting from the left.

which he must have seen in Theo's apartment. Jo van Gogh-Bonger first exhibited *Prawns and mussels* in 1905, when it was probably still unframed.[10] A photograph of 1913 shows that by then it had been given a fairly wide, flat frame (fig. 72c) of a type used for other works in the collection, among them *The sower* of 1888 (Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum).[11]

10 Amsterdam 1905, no. 88.
11 On these frames see Van Tilborgh 1995, p. 178, fig. 170.

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Bonger 1890, no. 22 [Crevettes & moules]; Druet 1920, no. 40702; Grey 1924, ill.; De la Faille 1927, ill. p. 89; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 75, vol. 2, pl. LXX; De la Faille 1939, p. 220, no. 287; De la Faille 1970, pp. 130, 131, 621; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 229; Hulsker 1977, p. 255; Hulsker 1980, p. 255; Amsterdam 1987, p. 328, no. 1.133; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 85; Heijbroek/Wouthuysen 1993, pp. 44, 45, 192; Hulsker 1996, pp. 254, 255; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 67, 74, note 69; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 54, 284, 307.

Exhibitions
1905 Amsterdam I, no. 88 [Dfl. 700]; 1906 Rotterdam, no. 29; 1906 Middelburg, no cat.; 1908 Paris, no. 9 [Ffr. 2,500]; 1908 Munich, no. 23 (Dfl. 1,000); 1908 Dresden, no. 23 [Dfl. 1,000]; 1908 Frankfurt am Main, no. 25 (for sale); 1908 Zürich, no. 18; 1908 The Hague & Amsterdam, no cat. known, no. 27; 1908 Berlin II, no cat. known [Dfl. 1,500]; 1913 New York, no. 432 [$2,600]; 1913 Chicago, no. 416 [$2,600]; 1913 Boston, no. 221 [$2,600]; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 38; 1927 Paris, no cat.; 1930 Amsterdam, no. 7; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 27; 1932 Manchester, no. 9; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 62; 1954-55 Bern, no. 25; 1955 Antwerp, no. 175; 1963 Utica & New York, no. 432; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2000-01 London, Amsterdam & Williamstown, unnumbered [only London]; 2003 Amsterdam II, unnumbered.

73
Shoes

Paris, September-November 1886
Oil on canvas
38.1 x 45.3 cm
Signed at top left in red: Vincent
Inv. s 11 V/1962
F 255 JH 1124

Underlying image: view from Theo's apartment in rue Laval (figs. 73c, 73d)
March-early June 1886

Although the lack of flowers meant that he was unable to carry on painting flower pieces from the autumn of 1886 to the spring of 1887, Van Gogh retained his interest in the still-life genre but now chose other subjects: fish (fig. 72b), shellfish (cat. 72), fruit (cats. 88, 89), budding flower bulbs (cats. 79, 81) and shoes.[1] He made five paintings of the latter, rather unusual subject, including this one.[2]

There is one pair of shoes in each painting apart from the large one in Cambridge (Mass.), in which there are three pairs (fig. 73b). They are all of the same type of shoe: low boots of almost identical shape. There are shoes with elasticised sides (cat. 78), lace-up shoes (fig. 78a), and shoes with metal shoelace hooks (cat. 73 and fig. 73a). The three types are brought together in the large still life, where they are displayed on a cloth (fig. 73b), the suggestion being that they are on a table, as they are in one of the other two paintings in this group (fig. 73a).[3] That is probably the case with the present painting as well (cat. 73), only it is a little more difficult to make out.

Shoes were worn by members of every class, but since the ones in these paintings are down at heel and worn-out they can only be workmen's shoes. A gentleman would never have dared show himself in public with such broken-down footwear. It is clear that Van Gogh was fascinated by the wear to the shoes not only from the still lifes but also from an anecdote related by François Gauzi, a fellow student at Cormon's studio. He wrote about one of these works: 'At the flea market he'd [Van Gogh] bought an old pair of clumsy, bulky shoes – peddler's shoes – but clean and freshly shined. They were fine old clonkers, but unexceptional. He put them on one afternoon when it rained and went for a walk along the old city walls. Spotted with mud, they had become interesting.'[4]

As paintings, the five works fall into two groups. Two are colourful and thinly painted (cat. 78, fig. 78a), and date from early 1887. The other three have a palette of earth colours, are in an impasted style (cat. 73, figs. 73a, 73b), and are usually dated to Van Gogh's first year in Paris, although some authors left open the possibility of an earlier date, especially for this painting (cat. 73), which they believed was made in 1885.[5]

That, though, is untenable. Both the standard commercial size and the thin, open weave of the canvas of *étude* quality are typical of the supports Van Gogh used in Paris (see Table 3.5, no. 35).[6] In addition, it is painted on top of a scene which

1 Two other still lifes are F 203 JH 1123 and F 283 JH 1120.
2 Cat. 73, figs. 73a, 73b, cat. 78 and F 333 JH 1236 (fig. 78a). Van Gogh later returned to this subject, once in Arles and once in Saint-Rémy (F 461 JH 1569 and F 607 JH 1364).
3 On the right, at any rate, there is a sharp, diagonal demarcation which looks like the edge of a table.
4 Gauzi 1954, p. 31: '[...] au marché aux puces, il [Van Gogh] avait acheté une paire de vieux souliers lourds, épais, des souliers de charetier, mais propres et cirés de frais. C'était de riches croquenots qui manqueaient de fantaisie. Il les chaussa un après-midi qu'il pleuvait et partit en promenade le long des fortifications. Maculés de boue, ils devenaient intéressants'.
5 Cat. 73 is listed in Bonger 1890 as a work from the Paris period (no. 24 or 34), as it is in Amsterdam 1905 (no. 72). This was adopted by De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 75, where fig. 73b was also given that date (ibid., p. 94). F 332a JH 1233 (fig. 73a) first appeared in Liège etc. 1946-47, p. 44, no. 34bis, with the statement that it was painted in Nuenen. Nordenfalk 1947, p. 136, note 3, then applied that date to cat. 73. Bowness in London 1968-69, no. 52, agreed with that, but in De la Faille 1970 both paintings were again placed in Van Gogh's Paris period. Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 229, also dated them to the autumn of 1886, as did Jan Hulsker and Ronald Pickvance (Hulsker 1996, and Pickvance in New York 1984, p. 36). Others, though, were sceptical. Roskill 1970 II, pp. 9, 10, felt that cat. 73 came from Nuenen after all, and in this he was followed by Roland Dorn. He argued in three publications that both cat. 73 and fig. 73b dated from 1885; see Essen/Amsterdam 1990-91, p. 85, Mannheim/Amsterdam 1990, p. 383, note 9, and Dorn 2000, p. 173.
6 The canvas has a sizing layer that contains some orange ochre, and on top of that there is a single layer of lead-white ground that covers the picture area only. On the presence of a tinted size layer, see p. 112, note 94.



73 Shoes



73a *Shoes* (F 332a JH 1233), 1886. Private collection.



73b *Three pairs of shoes* (F 332 JH 1234), 1886. Cambridge (Mass.), Fogg Art Museum.

undoubtedly dates from his first year there. Although it was already known from an X-radiograph that there was another composition beneath the present work (fig. 73c), it was difficult to make out what it was.[7] It is heavily impasted, whereas the work on top is quite thinly painted. Examination of the relief of the paint in raking light photographs combined with infrared reflectography and inspection under the stereomicroscope revealed that Van Gogh had painted a view of rooftops (fig. 73d). In the left foreground there is a T-shaped pipe, and to the right of it a flat roof with chimneys. Behind that are the top two floors of a large apartment block.[8]

That scene cannot be linked to either the front or back of Theo's apartment in rue Lepic (compare cat. 56, fig. 95a), which means that it is probably a view from his earlier home at 25 rue Laval, where the two brothers lived until the beginning of June 1886.[9] That small apartment, which was on the second floor, looked out at the back on an inner courtyard and an apartment block on rue de Navarin, and the present view largely matches the scene painted by Van Gogh.[10]

The dating of cat. 73 to the autumn of 1886 ties in with the date of the other two works in the group (figs. 73a, 73b). Although it has been suggested that they too are from Van Gogh's Dutch period,[11] that is unlikely. Like the present one they were painted on top of scenes with subjects that point to a Paris origin.[12] In both cases X-radiographs revealed flower still lifes identical in composition to the ones that Van Gogh made in the summer of 1886 (compare cats. 67-71). This means that the scenes on top are later, but must have been painted before the winter of 1886-87, when Van Gogh began practising *peinture à l'essence*. Given the large size of the Cambridge still life, it would have been the last of the three in this group (fig. 73b), but it is impossible to say which of the smaller ones was the first. Both are signed, they are of identical size, and there is little stylistic difference between them.

The view over the rooftops was completely dry when Van Gogh began on this painting (cat. 73). He set to work immediately, without scraping the first scene off or even applying a neutrally coloured intermediate layer on top of it. Colours from that earlier view are still visible to the naked eye here and there, such as the bright red and yellow by the shoe on the right (fig. 73e). Van Gogh was evidently not bothered by those colours and the occasionally noticeable texture of the previous composition as he was painting the new one. It was only in his later *à l'essence* paintings that he carefully began to smooth the surfaces of old canvases.

Van Gogh opted for a tonal composition, as he did in the other two works,

7 Van Heugten 1995, p. 76, no. 11, believed that it could be a street scene (the only motif immediately recognisable in the X-radiograph is a house), the date of which was impossible to determine. Dorn 2000, p. 173, however, was not satisfied with this and said that it was the windmill at Gennep, interpreting the foreground as a stretch of water.

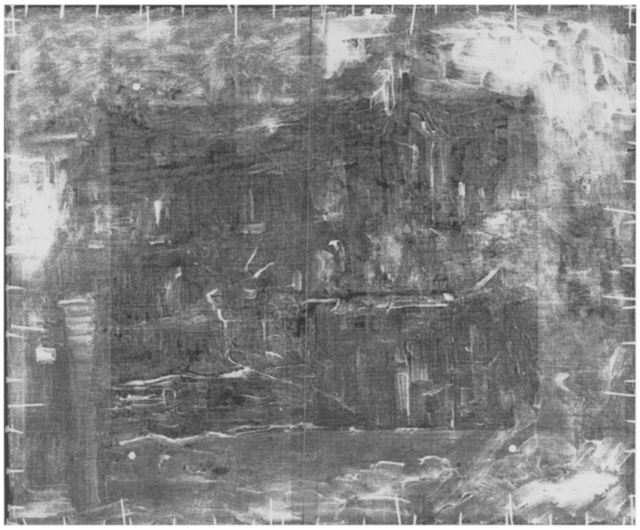
8 Standing between these two dwellings on the left are trees or tall shrubs, the foliage of which extends above the roof of the house in the foreground.

9 It is perhaps unnecessary to add that there is also no resemblance to *Houses seen from the back* (cat. 49), which is the view from the back of Van Gogh's lodgings in Antwerp. It is known that Theo lived on the second floor at 25 rue Laval from the land registry records from 1876 onwards (Paris, Archives de Paris). There were dwellings both to the right and left of the entrance, and Theo's apartment, to which he moved in 1883, was on the left.

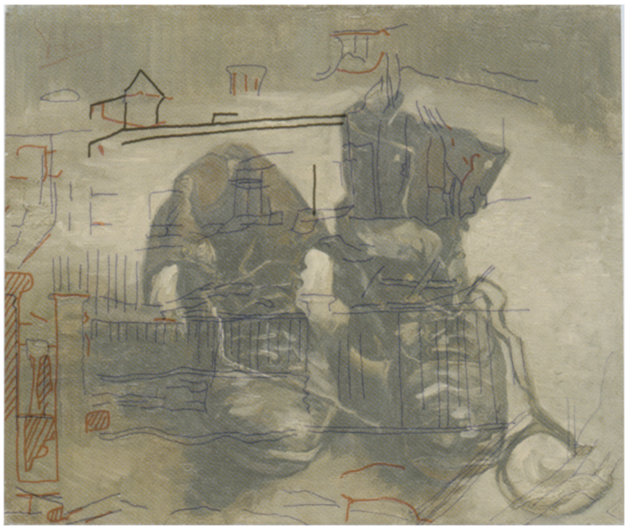
10 Kind communication from Bernard Vassor.

11 See note 5 above.

12 For the overpainting of F 332 JH 1234 (fig. 73b) see O'Brian 1988, pp. 154, 155, and of F 332a JH 1233 (fig. 73a) sale cat. London (Christie's), 8 December 1999, lot 11.



73c X-radiograph of cat. 73.



73d Reconstruction of the scene under cat. 73.
– impasted lines, visible on surface in raking light; – lines and areas picked up by infrared reflectogram that vary from surface observations; – lines visible on X-radiograph not visible from surface observations.

probably because of the subject of dirty, very muddy shoes. Browns, black and dirty white predominate. The only bright touch of colour is the red signature, which he added when the painting was already dry. During his Nuenen period he had constantly alternated colouristic works with tonal ones, and he now continued doing so, but in a different way. Back home he had mainly used earth colours, but now he chose subdued paints which he mixed with bolder pigments, employing what he had learned about colour in the summer of 1886, among them emerald green and viridian green.[13] This gave him a result that was livelier than mixtures of solely grey or brown pigments.

The still life was painted rapidly, wet-into-wet with a loose touch, probably in a single session. Van Gogh roughly indicated the shoes first, then the background. He started off with fairly thin paints but then gradually thickened them, especially in the highlights and the details. He seems to have built the scene up to the light from a rather darker design, working alternately on the shoes and background in order to attune the tones to each other.

The rather unusual iconography of the painting has set many pens in motion.[14] It was thought for a long time that the depiction of worn-out footwear was Van Gogh's way of expressing his admiration for the harsh but honest lives of agricultural workers, which he wanted to emulate as an artist.[15] Like his great role model Jean-François Millet, who supposedly wore clogs, he had no need of 'fine shoes and the life of a gentleman. [...] So what I hope not to forget is that – "it's a question of going around in clogs", that is of being content as regards food, drink, clothes, sleep, with what the peasants are content with' [493].[16]

13 For these Nuenen still lifes see Paintings 1, cats. 30-34. Dorn 2000, p. 173, stated that Van Gogh used his 'usual cool (Prussian) blue' in cat. 73, but analyses of the paint show that it is in fact ultramarine (see Table 7). Dorn's suggestion that the green in the painting is a mixture of blue and yellow is also incorrect, for Van Gogh used viridian and emerald green.

14 That was mainly due to the article that Martin Heidegger originally published in 1936 (Heidegger 1977), in which the famous philosopher used the still life in the Van Gogh Museum to demonstrate that there was a difference 'between reality and the way in which we become aware of reality through the work of art' ('tussen de werkelijkheid en de manier waarop wij ons door het kunstwerk van de werkelijkheid bewust worden'), as Wessel Krul put it in Krul 1999, p. 18. Heidegger was far more verbose than Krul, and for that and other reasons the latter labelled his contribution 'literary fiction' and 'poetry' ('literaire fictie, [...] poëzie'; ibid., p. 17). Meyer Schapiro had already spoken back in 1968 of his astonishment at Heidegger's central thesis, which was that these were the shoes of a peasant woman of Nuenen, but that was to little avail (Schapiro 1968), because Heidegger's prestige was and is so great that people are still reacting to his publication. Walker 1980 and Bloom/Hill 1988 provide a summary of this largely philosophical discussion in which the sociologist Jacques Derrida joined the debate, even more verbosely than Heidegger (Derrida 1987). For later additions see the contributions of Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, David Joel Schapiro and Joseph D. Masheck in Masheck 1996, pp. 273-80, 282-94 and 295-317, and Batchen 2009.

15 This is the interpretation given in Werness 1972, pp. 214, 215, Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 138, 139, and Van Tilborgh 1987, pp. 124, 125.

16 The quotation about clogs is from a letter of Millet's cited in Sensier 1881, p. 217. For the myth about Millet being a simple, clog-wearing peasant see Van Tilborgh 1998, pp. 34-44.



73e Photomicrograph of cat. 73 showing spots of colour from the underlying composition.

What made this interpretation so attractive was that it united Van Gogh's outlook on life with his art, but it is difficult to sustain when examined more closely. These are not the workaday shoes of agricultural labourers; they are not clogs but low boots.[17] However, they have often been interpreted as 'a kind of urban translation of Millet's wooden shoes'.[18] Now the theory is that, unlike peasants, urban labourers did wear shoes of this kind, so Van Gogh was indeed depicting the simple lifestyle that he hankered after. That, though, is illogical, because he did not identify so much with urban labourers.[19] His adoration was reserved for workers on the land, who did 'manual labour' and 'thus honestly *earned* their food', as he wrote of his *Potato eaters* of 1885 [497].

This dismissal of the old, accepted interpretation of the painting opens the way for a different one. In the 1970s, quite separately from the above interpretation, it was suggested that Van Gogh's inspiration for the scene came from Jules-Ferdinand Jacquemart's *Travel souvenirs* of 1862 (fig. 73f).[20] That etching was included in the first album of the Société des Aquafortistes of the same year, and was lauded by the critic Philippe Burty as 'one of the most perfect that we have seen'.[21] As someone who had worked in the art trade, Van Gogh knew the series, and now that he was back in Paris he could well have seen that striking, unusual print again.[22]

The objects depicted in *Travel souvenirs* are a roll of paper, a small outdoor palette, drawing materials in a carrying case, and nine worn-out, lace-up boots and shoes. Although the title *Travel souvenirs* is a little anecdotal, it suggests that we are seeing the studio of a true Realist: an artist who did not retreat into his home and put up the shutters but who went out of doors in search of his subjects and was thus prepared to travel long and far (and wear out several pairs of shoes in the process). The similarity to Van Gogh's horizontal still life is striking (fig. 73b), and if he wanted to portray himself as a convinced Realist working *en plein air* with his depictions of worn-out shoes based on the example of Jacquemart's print, that is certainly borne out by the recollections of Emile Bernard, among others, who was at pains to stress that these works were of 'the shoes that he wore on his expeditions'.[23]

Many writers, though, thought that Van Gogh's still lifes with shoes concealed a loftier, more complex message. According to them, he wanted the worn-out footwear to symbolise his path through life and be seen as allusions to his 'fundamental honesty and past struggles'.[24] By extension, it has also been asserted that the subject was based on 'the pilgrimage and trailblazing imagery' that the English writer Thomas Carlyle, whom Van Gogh admired, had used so effectively in his *Sartor resartus* 'to describe the emergence and propagation of revitalizing artistic movements'.[25]

17 This misunderstanding was due entirely to the earlier assumption that the still lifes with shoes were painted in Nuenen. It is not known for certain that Van Gogh never depicted the subject while he was living there. One of his pupils from the Brabant period, Dimmen Gestel, recalled that Van Gogh took not only birds' nests and potatoes as his subjects, but also 'a pair of shoes' (Dimmen Gestel to Albert Plasschaert, 29 July 1921, b 3039: 'een paar schoenen'). That is a late recollection, so it cannot be ruled out that Gestel mistakenly placed cat. 73 in the Brabant oeuvre and made his remark on that basis.
18 Chicago/Amsterdam 2001-02, p. 75.
19 He did sometimes wear their kinds of jacket when he was working, but that does not necessarily mean that he identified with them, as Welsh-Ovcharov would have it (Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 139). For one thing, those jackets were a cheap alternative to the traditional, more expensive painter's smock.
20 This suggestion was made almost simultaneously by Bailly-Herzberg 1972, vol. 1, pp. 56, 57, 73, and Werness 1972, p. 215, after which James A. Ganz refocused attention on it in Ganz 1991. However, for a long time these contributions to the debate were not spotted by those writing about Van Gogh's still lifes with shoes. Nordenfalk 1947, p. 136, note 3, suggested that an 1882 still life of shoes by Nils Kreuger was Van Gogh's source of inspiration, but there is no reason to believe that the Dutch artist was aware of the work of the Swedish painter. What does seem very likely, though, is that the latter also followed Jacquemart's example. An interesting, anonymous late 19th-century still life of shoes is reproduced in J.B. de la Faille, *Les faux van Gogh*, Paris and Brussels 1930, p. 35, no. 144, pl. XLI.
21 Philippe Burty, '"La Société des Aquafortistes", publication artistique d'eaux-fortes, oeuvres originales', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (February 1863), p. 191, cited in Bailly-Herzberg 1972, vol. 1, p. 57: '[...] une des plus parfaites que nous ayons vues'.
22 Ganz 1991 rightly pointed out that letter 305 shows that Van Gogh knew the series well. In it he also mentions an etching by Daubigny that was published in the society's first album along with Jacquemart's *Travel souvenirs*. See also Werness 1972, p. 215.
23 Emile Bernard in an unpublished article on Van Gogh for *Le Moderniste*; see Roland Dorn, 'Appendix B', in Mannheim/Amsterdam 1990, p. 382: '[...] les chaussures qui lui ont servi a ses explorations'. Paul Gauguin, in 'Nature mortes', *Essais d'art libre* 4 (January 1894), p. 273, also suggested that Van Gogh had painted his own shoes in these still lifes. The association of shoes with Realism was a common one, as explained in Korte 1976.
24 Werness 1972, p. 212, and see Walker 1980, p. 19.
25 Chicago/Amsterdam 2001-02, p. 75.



73f Jules-Ferdinand Jacquemart, *Travel souvenirs*, 1862. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

However, there is no evidence to support far-reaching interpretations of this kind, nor, in our view, did Van Gogh choose the shoes to present himself as an artist working *en plein air*. As Gauzi had suggested, he was mainly interested in the shoes for their worn-out look. That fitted in with the Realists' aim of depicting everyday, humble subjects – 'close to the ground', as Van Gogh so aptly put it himself [226]. It is a simple fact that he had a preference for things to which 'life and reality have given [...] a drubbing', to quote from a letter of 1881 [193], and the down-at-heel shoes belong to that category. Like his sunflowers gone to seed (see cat. 124), he saw in them 'that *je ne sais quoi* of withering' in which he found 'such infinite charm' [193]. Admittedly these are words that Van Gogh had written back in 1883 about his older lover Sien Hoornik, who had been battered by life and whom he depicted in *Sorrow*, but they are just as applicable to these muddy shoes. He believed that everyday, battered objects of this kind embodied the essence and tragedy of life.[26]

Quite apart from this symbolism, Van Gogh would also have understood that a pair of worn-out shoes like this was both original and surprising as an image. That could equally well have been the basis for his later attempts to paint the subject, nor should one lose sight of the fact that shoes, unlike flowers, fish and fruit, were not seasonal. He could always fall back on them if he wanted still lifes to paint.

26 On this see Van Tilborgh 2008, pp. 48-50.

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
Bonger 1890, no. 24 [Paire de chaussures] or no. 34 [Paire de chaussures]; Duret 1916, pl. XXI; Druet 1920, no. 20103; Colin 1925, pl. 15; Bremmer 1926, vol. II, p. 85, no. 85; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 75, vol. 2, pl. LXIX; De la Faille 1939, p. 196, no. 248; Nordenfalk 1948, p. 136; Gauzi 1954, p. 31; Stellingwerff 1959, pp. 93, 94; Graetz 1963, pp. 47-49; Schapiro 1968, pp. 203-09; London 1968-69, p. 50, no. 52; De la Faille 1970, pp. 130, 621; Roskill 1970 I, p. 235; Roskill 1970 II, pp. 9, 10; Werness 1972, pp. 210-17; Korte 1976, p. 8; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 82, 139, 140, 201, note 12, 229; Heidegger 1977; Hulsker 1977, pp. 244, 246; Hulsker 1980, pp. 242, 244, 246; Walker 1980; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 156, 157, 328, no. 1.130; Derrida 1987; Bloom/Hill 1988; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 85; Van Cologne 1993, pp. 18-25; Van Heugten 1995, p. 76, no. 11; Hulsker 1996, pp. 242, 246; Tokyo 1996, pp. 54, 55, 139, 140, no. 5; Masheck 1996; Shackelford 2000, pp. 95, 96, ill. 82; Dorn 2000, pp. 172, 173; London etc. 2000-01, p. 224; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 67, 74, note 72; Coyle 2007, p. 338; Batchen 2009; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 55, 284, 307.

Exhibitions

1895 Paris, no cat.? [possibly F461 JH 1569]; 1896-97 Paris, no cat. [Ffr. 150] [possibly cat. 78]; 1905 Amsterdam I, no. 72 [Dfl. 1,000]; 1905 Utrecht, no. 20 [Dfl. 1,000]; 1905 Leiden, no. 20 [Dfl. 1,000]; 1906 Rotterdam, no. 20; 1906 Middelburg, no cat. [Dfl. 1,000]; 1908 Paris, no. 6 [Ffr. 3,500]; 1908 Munich, no. 16 (Dfl. 1,500); 1908 Dresden, no. 16 [Dfl. 1,500]; 1908 Frankfurt am Main, no. 18 (for sale); 1908 Zürich, no. 10; 1908 The Hague & Amsterdam, no cat. known, no. 6; 1908 Berlin II, no cat. known [Dfl. 1,800]; 1909-10 Munich, no. 8, Frankfurt am Main, Dresden & Chemnitz, no cat. known [Dfl. 2,000]; 1910 Leiden, no cat. known; 1911 Amsterdam, no. 11 [Dfl. 3,200]; 1911-12 Hamburg, no cat. known [DM.? 3,000]; 1911-12 Bremen, no cat.; 1912 Dresden & Breslau, no. 28; 1914 Antwerp, no. 72; 1914 Berlin, no. 40; 1914 Cologne & Hamburg, no cat. known; 1920 New York, no. 41 [$12,000]; 1923-24 London, no. 14; 1924 Basel, no. 3 (not for sale); 1924 Zürich, no. 8 (not for sale); 1924 Stuttgart, no. 1 (not for sale); 1925 Paris, no. 6 [not for sale]; 1925 The Hague, no cat.; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 9; 1928-29 Hanover, Munich & Leipzig, no cat., no. 4, no cat. known; 1929 Utrecht, no. 12 [not for sale]; 1930 Amsterdam, no. 6; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 22; 1945-46 Amsterdam, no. 14; 1946 Stockholm, Gothenburg & Malmö, no. 26; 1946 Copenhagen, no. 26; 1946-47 Liège, Brussels & Mons, no. 77; 1947 Paris, no. 75; 1947 Geneva, no. 75; 1947 Groningen, no. 23; 1947-48 London, Birmingham & Glasgow, no. 14; 1948 Bergen & Oslo, no. 10; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 61; 1950 Hilversum, no. 11; 1951 Arles, no. 14; 1951 Lyon & Grenoble, no. 14; 1951-52 Nijmegen & Alkmaar, no. 5; 1952 Enschede, no. 17; 1952 Eindhoven, no. 16; 1954-55 Bern, no. 17; 1955 Antwerp, no. 167; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 81; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 15; 1956 Leeuwarden, no. 12; 1956 Breda, no. 88; 1957 Breda, no. 38; 1957 Marseille, no. 23; 1957-58 Leiden & Schiedam, no. 10; 1958 Deventer, no. 8; 1958 Mons, no. 10; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 18; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 14; 1960-61 Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg & Toronto, no. 26; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 16; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 16; 1963 Sheffield, no. 3; 1963 Humlebæk, no. 12; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 12; 1965 Charleroi & Ghent, no. 8; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 12; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 21; 1968-69 London, no. 52; 1969-70 Los Angeles, Saint Louis & Philadelphia, no. 12; 1970-71 Baltimore, San Francisco & New York, no. 12; 1971-72 Paris, no. 21; 1972 Bordeaux, no. 7; 1972-73 Strasbourg & Bern, no. 5; 1987-88 Manchester, Amsterdam & New Haven, no. 108; 1992 London, no. 31; 1996 Tokyo, no. 5; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 18; 2000-01 London, Amsterdam & Williamstown, unnumbered [not in Amsterdam]; 2003 Amsterdam II, unnumbered; 2005 Tokyo, Osaka & Nagoya, no. 34; 2009-10 Cologne, unnumbered.

74
Self-portrait as a painter

75
Self-portrait with pipe

74
Paris, September-November 1886
Oil on canvas
46.4 x 38.3 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 160 V/1962
F 181 JH 1090

Underlying image: view of impasse des Deux Frères (fig. 74a)
Summer 1886 or later

Letter 569 [?]

75
Paris, September-November 1886
Oil on canvas
46.0 x 38.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 158 V/1962
F 180 JH 1194

Underlying image: bust of a nude woman (fig. 74f)
March-early June 1886

Letter 569 [?]

As far as we know, Van Gogh only started painting self-portraits in Paris. After an initial attempt, modest in size, while studying with Cormon (cat. 52), he did not tackle the genre again until the autumn of 1886, with these two paintings as the result (cats. 74, 75).[1] He evidently thought that they were promising, because there was no holding him from now on. It was followed by around 25 more in the Paris period, 14 of which are now in the Van Gogh Museum (cats. 76, 77, 97, 98, 116-20, 122, 125, 129, 130, 137).[2]

This large number seems to point to 'a special preoccupation, if not a project', as Carol Zemel put it.[3] She believed that Van Gogh had embarked on a deliberate, long search for his own identity or for his own profession, but it is difficult to back that supposition.[4] Only twice did Van Gogh include accessories that present him unambiguously as an artist (cats. 74, 137), and it is doubtful whether the other portraits were intended to reveal anything of his own mental attitude.

Something that argues against a deliberate psychological interpretation is that most of the self-portraits are not ambitious.[5] Nor do we know for certain that Van Gogh regarded them all as self-portraits in the literal sense of the word. He himself said that a lack of models while he was in Paris meant that he had barely any opportunity to paint the portraits of other people,[6] and since there is no cheaper (or more malleable) model than oneself, this would seem to be a reasonable explanation for the large number of self-portraits.[7] In other words, Van Gogh would not have regarded them so much as attempts to portray himself as faithfully as possible,

1 F 178v JH 1198 could also have been made before then, but it requires further examination. See note 2 for this and another possibility.
2 The other self-portraits are F 178v JH 1198, F 268 JH 1299, F 295 JH 1211, F 319 JH 1333, F 320 JH 1334, F 345 JH 1249, F 365v JH 1354, F 366 JH 1345, F 380 JH 1225 and F 526 JH 1309. Koja/Stöbe 1990-91 demonstrated that F 1672a JH 1344 is a forgery. The authenticity of F 178v JH 1198, F 268 JH 1299 and F 365v JH 1354 has also been called into question by Dorn/Feilchenfeldt 1993, pp. 290, 296-304, but their opinion needs closer examination (see also Appendix 2). Van Gogh's first sunflower still life, F 376 JH 1331 (fig. 124a), was painted on top of a self-portrait (see Trembley 1987-88 and fig. 77a), and that might also be the case with cat. 95 and *People strolling in a park, Paris* (F 225 JH 1110; on which see Vergeest/Verbeek 2005, pp. 7-9). If the painting beneath the latter is indeed a self-portrait, it was made before the autumn of 1886.
3 Zemel 1997, p. 136.
4 Either one makes works in which 'the soul' is the starting-point, Van Gogh wrote from Antwerp, in which 'one should regard the form as a means of expressing an impression, a sentiment', or paintings in which 'one models for modelling's sake because it's so infinitely beautiful in itself' [550]. Both kinds were 'high art', in his view, so both will be represented in his oeuvre, including the self-portraits.
5 Van Gogh often opted for small sizes and cheap supports. There are eight self-portraits on painter's *carton* (cats. 97, 98, 122, 125, and F 295 JH 1211, F 345 JH 1249, F 380 JH 1225 and F 526 JH 1309), at least six on top of other paintings (cats. 74-77, 129 and F 268 JH 1299), one on cotton (cat. 130) and seven on the backs of works brought from Nuenen (cats. 116-20, F 178v JH 1198 and F 365v JH 1354).
6 Van Gogh gave various reasons for this. In the summer or autumn of 1886 he said that he 'lacked money for paying models' [569], and a year later he wrote that 'since then [his time in Nuenen] I haven't had the opportunity to find models' [574]. Theo gave another reason in 1889: 'Models didn't want to pose for him [in Paris]' (Van Crimpen 1999, p. 160, letter 46, 14 February 1889). Vincent said almost the same in mid-1888 when he wrote that 'I don't have enough power to get what I want to pose for me, where I want and for as long or as short as I want' [626].
7 This view of the self-portraits was expressed, among others, by Evert van Uitert, 'De zelfportretten van Vincent van Gogh', in Van Lindert/Van Uitert 1990, pp. 121-28, as well as by George T.M. Shackelford in Shackelford 2000, p. 121.



74 Self-portrait as a painter

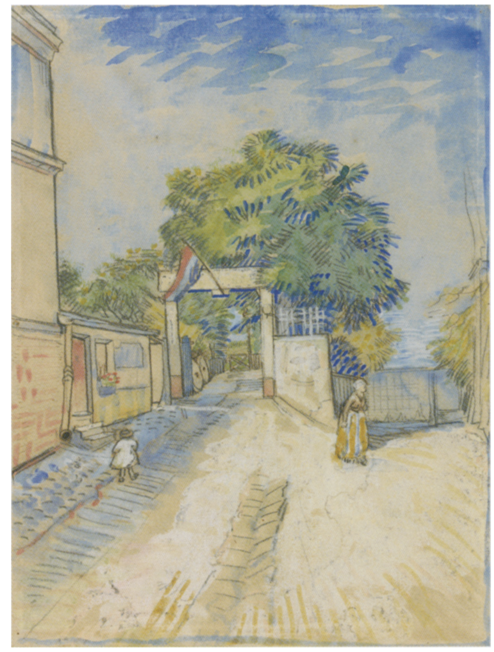


75 Self-portrait with pipe

74a X-radiograph of cat. 74.

74b *Entrance to the Moulin de la Galette* (F 1406 JH 1277), 1887. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.





as is already clear from the major differences in his appearance in them, but as exercises in portraiture in which he was guided by the new potentialities of colour and touch that he had just discovered.

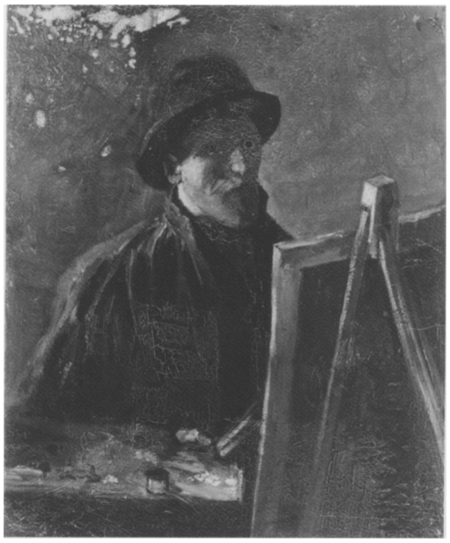
It was originally assumed that *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 74) was made in Nuenen.[8] However, it was moved to Paris in the revised, 1970 edition of De la Faille's oeuvre catalogue, and that new date has been generally accepted ever since.[9] Solid evidence for this came to light when it was discovered that it had been painted over a Paris street scene (fig. 74a).[10] Van Gogh had taken up a position in impasse des Deux Frères, with the Blute-fin windmill prominent in the background, as can be seen from the X-radiograph. Right in front of it is a low building with two steps leading up to it that stood at the end of the street (compare fig. 74b; see also cats. 64, 65, 93). On the right is the gateway leading to the 'Point de vue' (on which see cats. 92, 93), complete with a fluttering flag, with a couple strolling below it.

The scene under the self-portrait probably dates from the early autumn of 1886, when Van Gogh painted his *Moulin de la Galette* (fig. 92e), in which he also depicted one of the gateways to the Debrays' site combined with a view of a windmill (see cat. 92).[11] The composition of this first version looks a little cluttered, and that is probably why he regarded it as a failure. In 1887 he made another attempt to paint a view of the gateway (fig. 92h), although now not in oils but watercolour, which would have been forced on him by a shortage of funds (see cats. 116-21).[12]

Willem Steenhoff, director of the Mesdag Museum in The Hague, had already suspected back in 1927 that there was another painting beneath this self-portrait when he was preparing an exhibition of Van Gogh's paintings from the family collection. The self-portrait was already displaying many drying cracks at the time (fig. 74d), and its 'hopeless condition' led him to make a radical proposal to the owner, Vincent Willem van Gogh.[13] 'The [...] self-portrait (before the easel with a palette in the hand) is full of "craquelés". [...] The paint itself is cracked in innumerable places – very small cracks about which little can be done other than retouch them, to which I (and you too?) am very much opposed. But there is another painting beneath it. I do not know how you feel about exposing it. Then you would at least have something – the more so in that the portrait is not of any great consequence in itself (Dut. period). Well anyway, you might call on me sometime and we can dis-

8 De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 56. Vanbeselaere 1937 I, p. 416, then suggested that it was made in Antwerp, but few were convinced by this. De la Faille 1939, p. 154, then came up with both Antwerp and Nuenen, but Tralbaut 1948, p. 200, placed it firmly back in Van Gogh's Dutch period, citing the palette, which he felt was too dark. This view was then adopted by Bromig-Kolleritz 1954, pp. 28-30, and Erpel 1964, p. 68.
9 De la Faille 1970, p. 179, followed by Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 224, and Hulsker 1996, pp. 234, 236. They dated it to Van Gogh's first few months in Paris. Although nothing was said about it, that new dating could have been due to the X-radiograph taken of the painting in 1965 when it was in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. On this see the text of the entry.
10 Van Heugten 1995, p. 79, no. 14.
11 See Otterlo 2003, p. 162 for the dating of *Moulin de la Galette,* of which there is a second version (F 228 JH 1171). Doubt has been cast on the authenticity of another version, F 226 JH 1172.
12 See Richard 1988, p. 19, on the naming of this street. The watercolour shows the same two millstones behind the gate on the left as in the street scene beneath the self-portrait.
13 Letter to Vincent Willem van Gogh, 22 August 1927 (b 5631): 'hopeloozen toestand'.





74c Photograph of the entrance to the 'Point de vue', c. 1908. From: Richard 1988, p. 20.

74d Photograph of cat. 74 before the last restoration treatment.

cuss it. I understand that my idea frightens you at the moment'.[14] His suggestion was indeed too drastic for the owner, and was never put into practice.

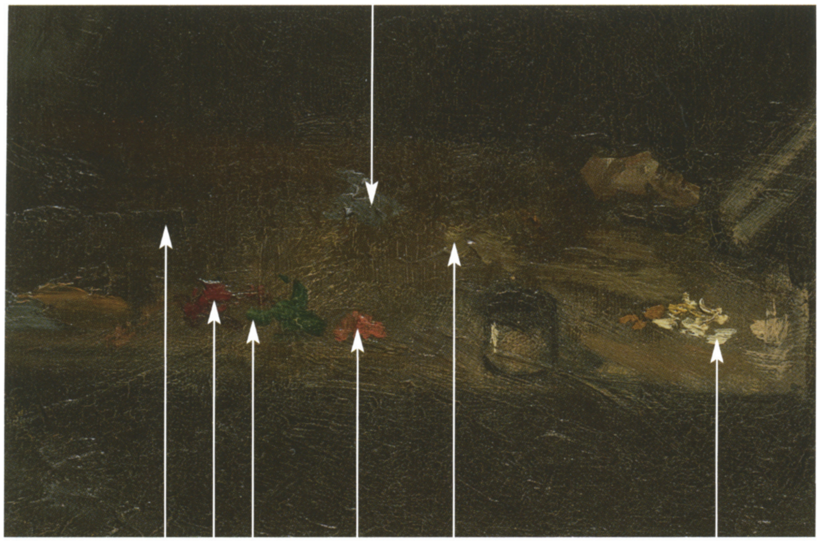
As he had done with his still life *Shoes* (cat. 73), Van Gogh did not scrape off the underlying scene before painting on top of it. Nor did he apply an intermediate layer. The street scene can be glimpsed through the present paint surface at various points, most notably behind the artist on the left, where the brown of the windmill creates an illogical shadow. The self-portrait was painted wet-into-wet, with green for the background in order to contrast with the orange and brown in the face and beard.

This was the first time that Van Gogh depicted himself as an artist. He is standing in front of a folding field easel which recurs in a self-portrait from the final months of his time in Paris (cat. 137).[15] He is holding a rectangular palette in his right hand, which in reality was his left hand, at least assuming he followed the usual practice of painting his portrait in a mirror.[16] There are two holes in the palette, one for his thumb and the other for his brushes (two in total), and a small pot which could be clamped to the palette and filled with oil or turpentine.[17] The same palette features in two other self-portraits, one from early 1888 (cat. 137) and the other from 1889, so like the folding easel it was part of his standard equipment.[18] The painting on the easel is oblong, so it is not the same as that of the self-portrait itself – a *figure* 8, which is much squarer.

On the palette there are unmixed colours – reddish orange and yellow ochre – and mixtures: blue with white, yellow with green, and light orange with brown, which, as analysis has shown, match the paints actually used in the self-portrait (see fig. 74e). The arrangement of the colours on the palette differs from that taught at academies, where it was stipulated that colours should be mixed with white to form various gradations and then laid down on the palette in a specific order.[19] On the right of Van Gogh's palette, though, there is only a series of blobs of yellow ochre mixed with various quantities of white.

There is a marked chiaroscuro, as in his first, highly academic self-portrait (cat. 52), but now Van Gogh combined it with a more colourful palette. He used fluid paint with only a few dry strokes in the illuminated passages. The thinness of the paint layer left the high relief of the underlying scene clearly visible, particularly in raking light. The top layer of paint suffered badly from the drying cracks, which were probably due to the street scene drying more slowly than the self-portrait. There was also large-scale paint loss after 1928 (fig. 74d), the cause of which can no longer be determined.[20]

14 Letter to Vincent Willem van Gogh, 3 June 1927 (b 5630): 'Het [...] zelfportret (vóór den ezel met palet in de hand) is vol "craquelés" [...] de verf zelf is op ontelbare plaatsen gebarsten – heele kleine barstjes waaraan niet veel te doen is door bijschilderen, waar ik (en jij ook?) zeer tegen ben. Maar daaronder zit een ander schilderij. Ik weet niet hoe jij erover denkt dit bloot te leggen. Dan heb je tenminste wàt – te meer daar het portret, dat op zichzelf niet van veel betekenis is (holl. tijd). Enfin, je komt misschien weleens en kunnen we erover spreken. Ik begrijp dat je nu nog van mijn idée afschrikt'. See also p. 29.
15 There is another type of studio easel in the self-portrait from the beginning of 1889 (F 527 JH 1657).
16 It is known from a letter of 1888 that he used a mirror a lot. 'I purposely bought a good enough mirror to work from myself, for want of a model, because if I can manage to paint the coloration of my own head, which is not without presenting some difficulty, I'll surely be able to paint the heads of the other fellows and women as well' [681].
17 Rectangular palettes were common in the 18th century but then fell out of fashion; see Schmid 1966.
18 The other work is F 626 JH 1770.
19 Callen 2000, pp. 138-41.
20 According to Tralbaut 1948, p. 220, the painting was 'damaged by fire. [...] Some colours may have darkened as a result' ('[...] brand beschadigd [...] Mogelijk verdonkerden daardoor sommige kleuren'), which is a reference to the lightning that struck Vincent Willem van Gogh's house in Laren in 1941. Technical examination, however, has revealed that there is no fire damage.



74e Detail of palette, on which the following colours have been analysed.[29]
1 Dark-red: red lake on a tin substrate, with possibly a little vermilion
2 Bright orange-red: vermilion
3 Light blue: cobalt blue, lead white and zinc white
4 Yellow: chrome yellow, lead white and zinc white
5 Green: viridian, emerald green and lead white
6 Blackish: Prussian blue, viridian, emerald green, lead white and zinc white
7 White: lead white and zinc white

The composition and chiaroscuro have led many to suspect that this painting is based on Rembrandt's famous self-portrait of 1660 in the Louvre, but one has to doubt whether Van Gogh needed that painting to legitimise this stock presentation of an artist at his easel. He depicted himself in a blue workman's jacket, of which he had several (see cats. 116-20). It has been claimed that he chose this article of clothing to proclaim his affinity with labourers, but that is doubtful.[21] Although it is difficult to be certain, it looks as if he is wearing a tie (and waistcoat) under the coat, which is a middle-class article, so it very much seems that he only put on the jacket as an inexpensive alternative to a painter's smock to protect his clothes while he worked.[22] The stiff, slightly rounded felt hat (see also cat. 76) was not part of formal middle-class attire but was worn by Bohemians.[23]

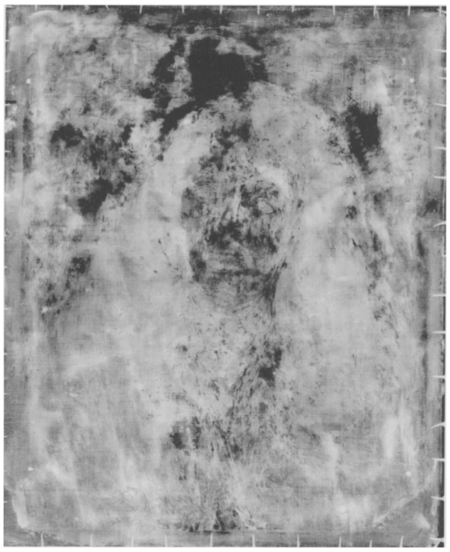
The other painting, *Self-portrait with pipe* (cat. 75), in which Van Gogh does not portray himself as an artist, was likewise initially dated to his Brabant period,[24] but it has been moved to Paris since the publication of De la Faille 1970.[25] Although some authors suggested dating it to Antwerp, there can be no doubt that it was painted in Paris. Both the thin and open weave of the canvas, which identify it as *étude* quality, and the ground consisting solely of lead white and calcium carbonate white, are typical of Van Gogh's work from that period (see Table 3.5, no. 40).

The self-portrait was painted on top of a bust-length study of a woman seen *en trois-quarts* with long hair hanging loose (fig. 74f) that appears light in the X-radiograph,[26] suggesting that a yellow or white lead pigment was used and that the woman had blonde hair.[27] That interpretation, though, is incorrect. Recent technical examination has shown that Van Gogh scraped off part of the study before applying a thick intermediate layer mainly consisting of lead white which he then smoothed locally with a palette knife. That layer was spread particularly thickly over the hair, and it is that, not only the woman's hair, that shows up so prominently in the X-radiograph.

Examination of the underlying paint surface with the stereomicroscope showed that the passage with the hair contains vivid crimson-red and orange-red patches as well as bright yellow ones. It also turned out that the lower part of the bust consists of light yellow and orangish colours, indicating that the model was nude. If that was the case, the portrait would have been painted during a lesson in Cormon's studio where, in contrast to the Antwerp academy, the students worked from the nude model.[28]

Like cat. 74, the self-portrait was executed almost throughout with thin, fluid

21 See, for example, Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 139.
22 Or as he put it in 1889: 'If I go out it's to work, so then I put on the most worn-out things I have, and I have a velvet waistcoat and trousers for here' [829].
23 E-mail from Frieda Sorber (Provinciaal Textielmuseum, Ranst), 5 June 2000.
24 See De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 56.
25 Vanbeselaere 1937 II, p. 542, was the first to suggest Antwerp, followed by Tralbaut 1948, p. 219, but with reservations. The editors of De la Faille 1970 then moved it to Paris, which was accepted by Welsh-Ovcharov 1976 and Hulsker 1996, the former proposing the early spring of 1886 (p. 224) and the latter the autumn of that year (p. 263).
26 Van Heugten 1995, p. 75, no. 10 (with the X-radiograph reversed left for right).
27 Ibid. The work was then associated with letter 547 from Antwerp, in which he said that he was looking for blonde models under the influence of Rubens's work.
28 There is another nude study from his time with Cormon, which he also painted over; see cat. 76.
29 XRF analysis was carried out by Luc Megens of the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands in February 2011 (RCE work number 00-78, documentation file 2000/42).



74f X-radiograph of cat. 75.

paint, with more viscous strokes being applied in the illuminated part of the face alone. The fact that the portrait nevertheless looks quite impasted is due solely to the coarse intermediate layer underneath, which also has a grainy structure. The latter consists of a cheap lead white paint that was cut with the coarsely ground mineral pigment barytes (Table 5). Once that white intermediate layer had dried properly Van Gogh applied various shades of grey for the background of the self-portrait, which he then painted wet-into-wet with marked chiaroscuro contrasts, as in *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 74). He later finished the background around the portrait, loosely covering the grey underlayer with brown-red strokes that contrast well with the cool grey and grey-pink flesh colours.

Both works were painted in the autumn of 1886, when Van Gogh felt the need to apply to more tonal paintings the knowledge that he had recently gained from his exercises in colour prompted by Monticelli. 'Now after these gymnastics', he wrote to his colleague Horace Mann Livens in Antwerp, 'I lately did two heads which I dare say are better in light and colour than those I did before' [569]. No other studies of heads have survived from this period apart from these two self-portraits, so it is very likely that this passage is a reference to them. The poor condition of *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 74) makes it a little difficult to detect any improvement in his feel for light and colour, but *Self-portrait with pipe* (cat. 75) is an excellent demonstration that he had made great strides in creating space and light around a head.

Cat. 74

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
De la Faille 1928, vol. I, p. 56, vol. 2, pl. XLVIII; Vanbeselaere 1937 I, p. 416; Vanbeselaere 1937 II, p. 542; De la Faille 1939, p. 154, no. 186; Tralbaut 1948, p. 220; Bromig-Kolleritz 1954, pp. 28-30, 32, 36, 40, 88, 89; Tralbaut 1958, p. 50; Erpel 1964, p. 52, no. 1; De la Faille 1970, pp. 100, 179, 618; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 123, note 38, 149, 224; Hulsker 1977, p. 236; Hulsker 1980, p. 236; Amsterdam 1987, p. 324, no. 1.104; Van Lindert/Van Uitert 1990, pp. 121, 123; Hamburg 1995, pp. 80, 81; Van Heugten 1995, p. 79, no. 14; Hulsker 1996, pp. 234, 236, 260; Zemel 1997, p. 149; Sund 2000, p. 187, ill. 172; Chicago/Amsterdam 2001-02, pp. 56, 57, 93; Dorn 2005, p. 21; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 67; Letters 2009, letter 569, note 7.

Exhibitions
1960 London, no. 1; 1994 Amsterdam, no cat.; 1995 Hamburg, unnumbered; 1998-99 Enschede, no cat.; 2001-02 Chicago & Amsterdam, no. 8.

Cat. 75

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
De la Faille 1928, vol. I, p. 56, vol. 2, pl. XLVIII; Vanbeselaere 1937 I, p. 416; Vanbeselaere 1937 II, p. 542; De la Faille 1939, p. 155, no. 188; London etc. 1947-48, p. 27, no. 11; Tralbaut 1948, pp. 217-20, 283, no. 17; Sutton 1948; Bromig-Kolleritz 1954, pp. 29, 34, 41, 45, 46, 48, 90, 91; Tralbaut 1958, pp. 48-50; Erpel 1964, p. 52, no. 3; London 1968-69, p. 49, no. 49; De la Faille 1970, pp. 100, 179, 618; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 123, note 38, 149, 224; Hulsker 1977, pp. 260, 262, 263; Hulsker 1980, pp. 260, 263; Amsterdam 1987, p. 324, no. 1.105; Tokyo 1994, pp. 38, 39, 114, 115, no. 3; Van Heugten 1995, p. 75, no. 10; Hulsker 1996, pp. 260, 262, 263; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 67; Budapest 2006-07, pp. 310, 311, no. 47, pp. 537-39; Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 284; Letters 2009, letter 569, note 7.

Exhibitions
1930 Amsterdam, no. 3; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1946 Maastricht & Heerlen, no. 13; 1946 Stockholm, Gothenburg & Malmö, no. 18; 1946 Copenhagen, no. 17; 1946-47 Liège, Brussels & Mons, no. 38; 1947 Paris, no. 38; 1947 Geneva, no. 39; 1947 Groningen, no. 22; 1947-48 London, Birmingham & Glasgow, no. 11; 1948 Bergen & Oslo, no. 7; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 35; 1949-50 New York & Chicago, no. 12; 1951 Lyon & Grenoble, no. 10; 1951 Saint-Rémy, no. 10; 1952 Enschede, no. 14; 1952 Eindhoven, no. 13; 1953 The Hague, no. 49; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 46; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 56; 1954 Zürich, no. 10; 1954-55 Willemstad, no. 6; 1955 Palm Beach, Miami & New Orleans, no. 6; 1955 Antwerp, no. 121; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 60; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 11; 1957 Marseille, no. 19; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 13; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 11; 1960 London, no. 2; 1960 Paris II, no. 45; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 13; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 13; 1963 Humlebæk, no. 10; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 10; 1964-65 Delft & Antwerp, no. 51; 1965 Nuenen, unnumbered; 1968-69 London, no. 49; 1978 Hamburg, unnumbered; 1994 Amsterdam, no cat.; 1994 Tokyo, no. 3; 1995 Hamburg, unnumbered; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 15; 2006-07 Budapest, no. 47; 2008 Laren, no cat.

76
Self-portrait with felt hat

Paris, December 1886-January 1887
Oil on canvas
41.5 x 32.4 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 162 V/1962
F 208a JH 1089

Underlying image: standing female nude (fig. 76a)
March-early June 1886

As in *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 74), Van Gogh is wearing a black felt hat that is slightly rounded, but this time it is not combined with a blue workman's jacket. The painting was only discovered in the family collection at a late date, and is not in De la Faille's oeuvre catalogues of 1928 or 1939.[1] The datings vary, as do the locations: Antwerp or Paris. Bromig-Kolleritz and De la Faille favoured the former, but Hulsker thought that it was from the spring of 1886, while Welsh-Ovcharov cautiously suggested 'late 1886'.[2] Unlike the heavily impasted works from Antwerp, though (cats. 45-50), it is smoothly and thinly executed.

The portrait is on a loosely woven canvas with thin threads of the standard *figure* 6 size (Table 3.5, no. 41). The canvas has never been lined, nor have the edges been trimmed, which is exceptional. The only modification is that it has been transferred to a new stretcher. The edges of the canvas contain the holes from the first stretching (together with some traces of rust from the tacks). The primary cusping on all four sides indicates that the canvas was stretched before being primed, which was probably done commercially. The ground, which contains lead white, some barytes, ochre and black pigments, was applied with a knife or spatula which left scratches that are clearly visible in the X-radiograph (fig. 76a) and in raking light.[3]

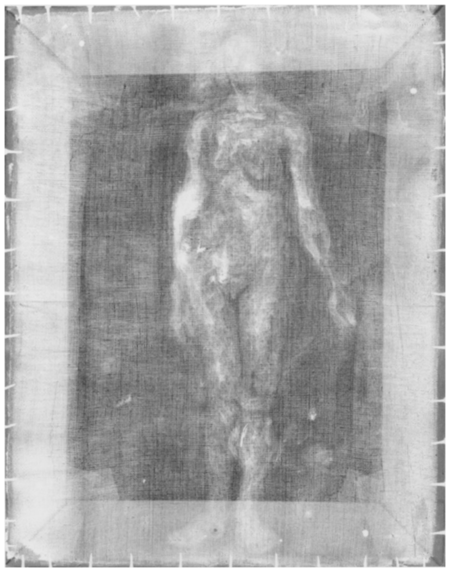
The self-portrait was painted on top of a scene of a standing female nude.[4] The light-coloured paint of the model's wrist and hand show through the present background. The X-radiograph (fig. 76a) and inspection in raking light reveal the strokes of the curves in the figure, which were applied with a hard brush. Most of the paint was applied thinly, and the palette was subdued, consisting of pale grey, pale orange and white. Van Gogh evidently felt it unnecessary to scrape that study off. Students did not work from the nude model in Antwerp, so the underlying scene must have been made in Cormon's studio, where Van Gogh took lessons in the spring of 1886.[5] The model was positioned rather oddly in the picture surface – an idiosyncrasy that is also found in the nude studies by Toulouse-Lautrec, who was a fellow student of Van Gogh's (fig. 76b).

The light in the self-portrait enters obliquely from the right, creating a powerful chiaroscuro contrast in Van Gogh's face. It can be seen in the thinly painted parts of the face that he first established the tonal relationships in the composition with subdued tints before painting them in full colour. There is no trace of an underlying sketch apart from a painted black line to the left of the hat. The grey and blackish paint of the first monochrome painting stage is clearly visible in the background around the hat. Van Gogh later made the background reddish brown, some of which was wiped off to expose the underlayer for a lively effect in the left part. The underpaint of the face was grey and brown, which only shows through in the shaded areas. The face was fluently modelled, with opaque paint for the light passages that is even quite impasted here and there. The lines and hatchings by the

1 It was not exhibited until after the Second World War.
2 Bromig-Kolleritz 1954; De la Faille 1970; Hulsker 1996. p. 236; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 224. The latter thought it was from the 'late Spring or possibly late 1886', but later proposed 'Vers le printemps' (Paris 1988, p. 40), and that has now been generally accepted.
3 There was a thin, irregular layer containing chalk on top of the ground in one of the two paint samples, both of which were taken from the edge of the scene. Further examination is required to determine whether this is a second, possibly local ground.
4 Van Heugten 1995, p. 81.
5 The type of canvas, ground and pigments are of no help in determining the period in which the nude and the self-portrait were painted.



76 Self-portrait with felt hat



76a X-radiograph of cat. 76



76b Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Study of a nude man*, c. 1885. Albi, Musée Toulouse-Lautrec.

beard are striking. The colours are muted and the complementary contrasts have been toned down. The red-brown of the background and the orange of the beard contrast with the blue of the cravat and the greenish flesh tints and irises of the eye. The wet-into-wet technique suggests that the portrait was completed in a single session, apart from the monochrome lay-in.

There is no immediate visual pendant of this painting in Van Gogh's oeuvre, which is probably why Matthias Arnold had some reservations about its authenticity in 1995.[6] He was followed in that by Roland Dorn, who wondered in particular whether the 'smooth manner' ('glatte Malweise') did not indicate that it was made by a fellow student at the Antwerp academy.[7] We do not share his view, for there were two periods during his first year in Paris when he painted thinly, at the beginning and the end, and the method used in this painting barely differs at all from that of his self-portraits from the autumn of 1886 (cats. 74, 75). In addition, his method of painting straight on top of an existing work without first scraping it off or covering it with a smooth intermediate layer is consistent with his practice at the time (see cats. 51, 73-75). Taken in conjunction with the underlying scene, we therefore have good reason for placing the work in the autumn of 1886. There is also a certain resemblance to his oeuvre of that winter, when he followed the example of Toulouse-Lautrec's *peinture à l'essence* (cats. 77, 78) before converting totally to Neo-Impressionism.[8] In our view, this self-portrait actually marks the cautious beginning of that process. As mentioned above, Van Gogh painted fine lines and hatchings near the beard, and he pursued this method of drawing with paint more consistently later on (cats. 85-88).

6 Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424. He considered that the authenticity of the work needed to be checked.
7 Dorn in Vienna 1996, p. 230; repeated in Dorn 2005, pp. 19, 21.
8 For their acquaintanceship see pp. 74-77.

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Not in De la Faille 1928; not in De la Faille 1939; Bromig-Kolleritz 1954, pp. 87, 92, 93; Erpel 1964, p. 53, no. 6; De la Faille 1970, pp. 108, 183, 619; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 123, note 38, 149, 224; Hulsker 1977, pp. 236, 266; Hulsker 1980, pp. 236, 264; Amsterdam 1987, p. 323, no. 1.103; Paris 1988, pp. 40, 41, no. 1; Van Lindert/Van Uitert 1990, pp. 121, 123; Tokyo/Nagoya 1985-86, pp. 38, 39, 94, no. 4; Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424; Hamburg 1995, pp. 78, 79; Van Heugten 1995, p. 81, no. 16; Hulsker 1996, pp. 234, 236, 260; Vienna 1996, pp. 230, 231, no. 92; Zemel 1997, p. 137; Shackelford 2000, pp. 99, 100, ill. 85; Dorn 2005, pp. 18, 19, 21; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 64, 73, note 48.

Exhibitions
1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered?; 1946 Stockholm, Gothenburg & Malmö, no. 30; 1946 Copenhagen, no. 18; 1955 Antwerp, no. 195; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 103; 1958 La Louvière, unnumbered; 1960 London, no. 18; 1968-69 London, no. 95; 1988 Paris, no. 1; 1993 Tokyo, no. 4; 1994 Amsterdam, no cat.; 1995 Hamburg, unnumbered; 1996 Vienna, no. 92; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.

77
Self-portrait with glass

Paris, January 1887
Oil on canvas
61.1 x 50.1 cm
Signed at top left in red (mixture of red and blue): Vincent 87
Inv. s 161 V/1962
F 263a JH 1199

Underlying image: bust of a nude (fig. 77b)
December 1886-January 1887

This painting is an unconventional portrayal of Van Gogh. As in some of his previous self-portraits he has a pipe and is neatly dressed (see cats. 52, 75), but unusually he has a flower or colourful handkerchief in his breast pocket.[1] However, what is really unusual is his setting, for he is standing or sitting at the bar in a café, only a small part of which is visible. Standing on the bar is a full glass, and although the type of glass does not suggest that the liquid is wine it would certainly be alcoholic. He was very fond of drink when he was in Paris, and described himself as 'almost an alcoholic' after he left [694].

The scene is not unique in Van Gogh's oeuvre. There is another portrait of him in a café, but he painted that over in the late summer of 1887 with a still life of sunflowers (figs. 124a, 77a).[2] He would have borrowed the subject of the lonely drinker from Toulouse-Lautrec (see figs. 84b, 90a), whom he was getting to know at this time.[3] Unlike his colleague, Van Gogh did not make a speciality of the subject, only depicting it four times (see cats. 84, 90). He began with self-portraits but then treated the subject indirectly by omitting figures altogether.[4]

This self-portrait is painted on top of another scene of a woman with her hair up and bared breasts, as the X-radiograph shows (fig. 77b).[5] That portrait must have been completely or largely finished, as can be seen from the extensive modelling with buttery brushstrokes and the pronounced impasto, which is visible through Van Gogh's face in the self-portrait. The first painting only seems to have been scraped off in the background, around the artist's head.

Despite the lack of details, the face in the underlying image is very similar to that of a woman in a portrait and two nude studies from the beginning of 1887 (figs. 77c, 77d).[6] The mouth is equally wide and the lips are comparably thick. Microscopic examination revealed that she has brown-red hair, and that too matches the portrait. Her curves are also identical to those of the nudes in the two studies (fig. 77d), all of which means that she is the woman of easy virtue whom Bernard described as 'the "tuppenny tart" *picked up* by Vincent, and who was very willing to agree to pose for him'.[7]

Van Gogh used a fairly inferior, thin-threaded canvas of the standard *figure* 12 size which was commercially primed (Table 3.5, no. 52). Like the previous self-portrait, the canvas remained unlined, and it has never been removed from its original stretcher, which is remarkable.[8] There is primary cusping along the right edge, and since the ground does not extend right up to the edge there, this was the side of the roll from which the canvas was cut.[9] The ground, which consists mainly of lead white with a little umber and orange ochre, was applied in two layers, the first of which also contains some barytes. Before the ground was applied the canvas was coated with glue which is clearly visible from the reverse. What is remarkable is that the ground has nowhere penetrated between the threads of the canvas, so the glue evidently prevented it from doing so.[10]

1 Drying cracks make this passage a little difficult to read, but there is a lot of green and blue and some yellow and orange.
2 See Trembley 1987-88.
3 On this see pp. 74, 75.
4 Van Gogh's new iconography was not entirely virgin territory. During his Hague period he had made a drawing of a 'gentleman' who has 'risen early' in a village inn and 'orders a glass of brandy for the cold' [330]: F – JH 339 (see Drawings 1, p. 226, cat. 64).
5 Van Heugten 1995, p. 82.
6 The third one is F 330 JH 1214. Works that are related to them are the studies, two of them nudes, SD 1718 JH 1152, F 328 JH 1212 and F 329 JH 1215, the last of which belonged to Bernard (Otterlo 2003, pp. 165-67). For the model see Drawings 3, pp. 249, 252, 253 and notes 6-13. She may be the woman described in letter 753, where Van Gogh speaks of a 'study of that woman who had such strange eyes, whom I met by another chance', which has been associated with F 357 JH 1216 (fig. 77c).
7 This is recorded in Gachet 1928 [unpaginated]: '[...] la "pierreuse", *récoltée* par Vincent qui voulut bien consentir à poser pour lui'.
8 Apart from this painting that only applies to cats. 53 and 54 of all the works examined.
9 A more consistent thread count measured for the vertical threads suggests that these correspond to the warp direction, supporting the idea that the right edge corresponds to the side rather than the end of the roll.
10 Microscopic examination suggested that the glue was applied in two layers: first a warm, liquid size that sank into the canvas threads, and then a cold, gelled layer that held the ground evenly on the surface.



77 Self-portrait with glass



77a Reconstruction of the underlying scene of *Sunflowers gone to seed* (F 376 JH 1331; fig. 124a), from: Trembley 1987-88, p. 6.



77b X-radiograph of cat. 77.



77c *Portrait of a woman* (F 357 JH 1216), 1887. Basel, Kunstmuseum, on loan from Sammlung Rudolf Staechelin.



77d *Study for 'Reclining female nude'* (F 1404 JH 1213), 1887. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

The self-portrait contains numerous severe drying cracks, especially in the lower passages. Van Gogh partly covered the underlying scene with a white layer which probably contained zinc white, which dries badly and caused the layer on top to crack. Examination with the stereomicroscope revealed colours in the drying cracks: the brown-red mentioned above for the hair, red and pink for the flesh tints, and dark brown for the background. They can also be seen with the naked eye here and there. The pink of the bared breast glimmers through the glass, and the dark brown background of that first scene can be seen along the edges of the canvas, since Van Gogh made the second composition smaller. The sketchy self-portrait was probably painted in a single session. The palette is muted. The orange-red of the beard and the warm tones in the background contrast with the cool tints in the hair and the grey clothing. The only bright colours are in the outline of the face and



77e *Portrait of Julien Tanguy* (F 263 JH 1202), 1887. Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek.

the occasional detail, including the flower (or handkerchief) in the breast pocket. At the last moment Van Gogh decided to enliven the scene by placing red hatchings and green dots in the background, which were his first experiments with the Pointillist technique. He was to apply it far more explicitly soon afterwards, but in combination with brighter colours and on a relatively smooth, light underlayer (cats. 79-82). Slightly longer, almost graphic brushstrokes were used in parts of the background and the clothing, as in the *Portrait of Julien Tanguy* (fig. 77e). However, the brushwork in that painting looks rather more flamboyant and fluent here, so cat. 77 would have been the first of the two. Tanguy's portrait is dated with a faded 'janvier 87', so this self-portrait with its signature 'Vincent 87' would have been painted earlier that month.[11] We assume from the drying cracks continuing through all the layers that the underlying nude was painted not long before, in December 1886-January 1887.

11 Van Gogh painted his signature in dark red, consisting of blue loosely mixed with an organic red pigment which has faded slightly. A drying crack has carried over into the signature, so it was added before the background paint was completely dry. Erpel 1964, p. 58, suggested that the signature might be by another hand but the editors of De la Faille 1970 rightly dismissed that idea.

PROVENANCE

1887-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1927-30 on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; 1962 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1962-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

LITERATURE

Bonger 1890, no. 303 [Portrait de Vincent (1887)]; De la Faille 1927, ill. p. 11; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 77, vol. 2, pl. LXXIII [as 263bis]; De la Faille 1939, p. 300, no. 414 [F 263bis]; Bromig-Kolleritz 1954, pp. 33, 102, 103; Erpel 1964, p. 58, no. 24; De la Faille 1970, pp. 132, 133, 621; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 149, 224; Hulsker 1977, pp. 260, 262, 264, 266; Hulsker 1980, pp. 260, 262, 264; Amsterdam 1987, p. 329, no. 1.134; Van Tilborgh 1994, p. 6; Hamburg 1995, pp. 92, 93; Van Heugten 1995, p. 82, no. 17; Hulsker 1996, pp. 260, 264; Dorn 2005, p. 21; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 68; Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 35.

EXHIBITIONS

1927 Paris, no cat.; 1930 Amsterdam, no. 8; 1932 Cologne, no cat. known; 1932 Manchester, no. 10; 1937 Paris, no. 28; 1937 Oslo, no. 5; 1938 Copenhagen, no. 12; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1947 Groningen, no. 24 [263bis]; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 66 [263bis]; 1949 Middelburg, no. 12 [263b]; 1951 Lyon & Grenoble, no. 16; 1951 Arles, no. 16; 1952 Enschede, no. 24; 1952 Eindhoven, no. 33 [263bis]; 1953 The Hague, no. 67; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 56; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 59 [263b]; 1954-55 Bern, no. 34 [263bis]; 1955 Antwerp, no. 196 [263bis]; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 104 [263bis]; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 26 [263bis]; 1960 London, no. 12; 1963 Antwerp, no. 40; 1971-72 Paris, no. 23; 1994 Amsterdam, no cat.; 1995 Hamburg, unnumbered; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.

78
Shoes

Paris, January-February 1887
Oil on *carton*
33.0 x 41.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 127 V/1962
F 331 JH 1235

After painting three still lifes of shoes in late 1886 (cat. 73, figs. 73a, 73b), Van Gogh returned to the subject at the beginning of the new year, when he made two fairly small studies that are now in Amsterdam and Baltimore (cat. 78, fig. 78a). Once again the shoes are battered and down-at-heel, but they are of two different types. The ones in the Van Gogh Museum have elastic sides, whereas the pair in Baltimore have laces (fig. 78a). The former painting is on *carton*, the latter on canvas, and since *carton* was cheaper we can assume that the Amsterdam picture was the first of the two.[1]

Van Gogh probably returned to the subject because of the new artistic direction he had now taken. In the second half of 1886 he had adopted the impasted brushwork of Monticelli, but he abandoned that around the turn of the year for Toulouse-Lautrec's *peinture à l'essence*.[2] This deliberately utilised the texture and colour of the support in the finished painting, and employed heavily diluted paints in combination with a more delicate, sometimes even highly draughtsman-like manner. He practised with portraits in order to master this new technique (cat. 77, fig. 77e), and with still lifes as well, for which he chose old, familiar subjects so that he could devote all his attention to form above content. Although he only really gave free rein to his new use of paint and brushwork in the Baltimore work (fig. 78a), which bears his imprimatur in the form of a signature, his new approach is also clearly recognisable in the one in Amsterdam (cat. 78).

The standard *figure* 6 *carton* has the same bright white ground of lead white and calcium carbonate as Van Gogh's previous *carton* supports (cats. 55, 57, 58, Table 2). This ground is not smooth, though, but is slightly textured because it was applied with a paint roller rather than brushed on and sanded. Van Gogh later opted for *carton* supports with a more conspicuously speckled surface texture (see cat. 125).[3]

He first painted a series of brown, green and ochre washes in order to tone down the bright white ground a little. The 'watery' paint was applied extremely thinly with vigorous movements, with a slightly darker tint being used for the position of the shoes.[4] The paint did not adhere to the nubs of the delicate texture of the ground, but slid down and encircled them, as it were, giving the layer a distinctively speckled look.

The scene was undoubtedly completed in a single, rapid session. Since Van Gogh had used a great deal of diluent for his first thin wash, it was dry when he started working on the subject itself. He depicted the shoes, which in reality were either black or brown, mainly in green, but he also used dark blue, dark red, red-brown, yellow and white, and chose the complementary pink and red-brown for the background. However, the rather dirty and yellowed layer of varnish now masks the multicoloured nature of the scene.

The shoes were modelled with short, narrow dashes, many of them parallel to

1 The Baltimore still life is also signed, whereas the Amsterdam one is not, contrary to what is stated in De la Faille 1970, p. 158, which was based on a misunderstanding.
2 See pp. 72-77 and 148-150.
3 See pp. 98, 99.
4 Examination did not reveal any preliminary underdrawing of the composition by the artist. A straight pencil line, which lies on top of the paint film but under the varnish, is visible at bottom right. This was added by the restorer J.C. Traas in 1929, when he marouflaged the support and slightly planed down its edges before varnishing the picture (invoice addressed to V.W. van Gogh, January 1930, b 4208).



78 Shoes



78a *A pair of shoes* (F 333 JH 1236), 1887. Baltimore, The Baltimore Museum of Art, the Cone collection, formed by Dr. Claribel Cone and Miss Etta Cone of Baltimore, Maryland.

each other, which follow the curves in the shoes. Although some of the strokes are more buttery, the paint is largely thin there as well, as can be seen from the drip of green at the back of the right-hand shoe. The background was worked up after the shoes, and the brushwork is now different, consisting of short, broad, mostly horizontal strokes. Here, too, the first washed underlayer plays a part in the final effect, apart from between the shoes, where the pink was applied thickly, probably to camouflage a pentimento.

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Bonger 1890, no. 24 [Paire de chaussures] or no. 34 [Paire de chaussures]; De la Faille 1928, vol. I, p. 94, vol. 2, pl. XCI; De la Faille 1939, p. 169, no. 249; De la Faille 1970, pp. 158, 159, 624; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 83, 201, note 12, 230; Hulsker 1977, pp. 272, 273; Hulsker 1980, pp. 272, 273; Amsterdam 1987, p. 329, no. 1.138; Rome 1988, no. 25; Essen/Amsterdam 1990-91, pp. 84, 85, no. 12; Hulsker 1996, pp. 272, 273; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 47, 58, 73, note 40; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 56, 285.

Exhibitions
1895 Paris, no cat.; 1896-97 Paris, no cat. [Ffr. 150] [possibly cat. 73]; 1926 The Hague, no. 119; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 29; 1932 Manchester, no. 8; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 87; 1953 The Hague, no. 78; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 68; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 69; 1954 Zürich, no. 13; 1954-55 Willemstad, no. 7; 1955 Palm Beach, Miami & New Orleans, no. 7; 1955 Antwerp, no. 169; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 23; 1960-61 The Hague, unnumbered; 1976 Nuremberg, unnumbered; 1988 Rome, no. 25; 1990-91 Essen & Amsterdam, nos. 12 and 11 respectively; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.

79
Basket of crocus bulbs

80
Flowerpot with garlic chives

79
Paris, January-February 1887
Oil on canvas
32.5 x 41.2 cm
Signed at lower left in red-brown: Vincent
Inv. s 179 V/1962
F 334 JH 1228

80
Paris, January-February 1887
Oil on canvas
31.9 x 22.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 183 V/1962
F 337 JH 1229

Underlying image: indeterminate
After March 1886

These are unusual subjects for Van Gogh. This is his only expression of artistic interest in chives, and he depicted budding flower bulbs no more than twice (cat. 81).[1] The ones in cat. 79 are instantly recognisable as crocuses. They are growing beneath the earth and have pointed leaves emerging from the outer covering, as Van Gogh correctly observed.[2] Crocus bulbs blossom in January-February, so this painting must date from the early months of 1887. *Flowerpot with garlic chives* is placed in the same period because of its similar style, which is derived from Neo-Impressionism.[3]

Basket of crocus bulbs is on a standard *figure* 6 canvas with a commercial, light, slightly pinkish ground (Table 3.5, no. 32). It is unlined, and on the reverse there is the number '30' twice (fig. 79a), which refers to the inventory of Theo's collection which Andries Bonger drew up in 1890, where the still life is described under that number as 'Bourriches d'oignons' (Baskets of onions).[4] The use of the plural is admittedly odd, but since there is no other doubt about the identification this must just have been a mistake on Bonger's part.

Like the background, the sprouting bulbs are in pale yellow and green tints that contrast with the dark, almost bluish earth in the basket. Each passage consists of a range of muted colours that are intermingled and applied on top of each other, mostly wet-into-wet, with different kinds of brushstroke. In the earth there are small, short, curved strokes, while longer, more flowing ones in yellow, pale green and pink were used for the shoots emerging from the bulbs, with fine white, blue and bright orange hatchings at right angles to them as the finishing touches. The paint layer is worn, and this is particularly apparent at bottom left. Van Gogh signed the work at bottom left once it had dried. He initially wrote the 'Vin' in a dark red paint but then decided to use a finer brush and a different colour, red-brown, with which he added the remaining letters of his name and reinforced the first three.

This is one of Van Gogh's first cautious experiments in the Neo-Impressionist style, with contrasting colours placed right next to each other. Around the turn of the year he had struck up a friendship with Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and Emile Bernard, who 'soon fell for Pointillism, because of its theories', and inspired by their work he began experimenting with this new style, modelling himself mainly on Toulouse-Lautrec with his use of dashes.[5]

The effect of bright contrasting colours placed side by side and varied, graphic brushwork is even more marked in the small, charming *Flowerpot with garlic chives*

1 The work was already being referred to as 'Small basket with crocuses' ('Mandje met crocussen') in Amsterdam 1905, no. 67, and that was retained by De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, no. 334.
2 The crocus bulbs are in what is known as a frame basket, probably made from hazelwood chips; kind communication from Esmé Hofman, Nationaal Vlechtmuseum, Noordwolde.
3 It is dated to the spring of 1887 in De la Faille 1970, p. 159, no. 334, and that has been accepted by later scholars.
4 Bonger 1890, no. 30.
5 Quotation from Bernard 1952 I, p. 318: '[...] tombâmes bientôt à peu près tous à force de théories dans le pointillisme'. See also pp. 72-77.



79 Basket of crocus bulbs



80 Flowerpot with garlic chives



79a Reverse of cat. 79.

(cat. 80), which Jo van Gogh-Bonger later gave a permanent place in the living room of her home in Amsterdam (fig. 79b). Although it was long thought that these were ordinary chives, that is not the case, because many of the leaves are not round but flat and tapering, which is characteristic of garlic chives.[6] Theo and Vincent had had 'an excellent kitchen-maid' since their move to rue Lepic, so this could very well be a plant that she had bought for the kitchen.[7]

Lying in front of the pot on the right are some leaves with their roots, which enliven the scene and prevent it from becoming too symmetrical. Van Gogh added the bent leaves sticking out on the left and right for the same reason. He painted a decorative pattern in the background which, apart from a few details, is identical to that in the *Carafe and dish with citrus fruit* (cat. 89). It has been suggested that it is wallpaper, but it could equally well have been inspired by an 'oriental carpet'.[8]

Flowerpot with garlic chives is painted on a finely woven, standard *paysage* 4 canvas commercially primed with lead white with a little gypsum (Table 3.5, no. 57). It lies on top of another scene, some shapes of which can be made out with infrared reflectography and X-radiographs. The complete composition, however, cannot be deciphered. It was covered with a dark underlayer that is visible to the naked eye, part of which was scraped off – the thicker areas at least, as can be seen in the paint surface with the microscope.

The flowerpot, the foreground and the background were roughly laid in on the dark underlayer with thin, light-coloured paint. Van Gogh then worked light and darker tints into each other wet-into-wet to create a gently coloured base tone, which is cool in the background and warm in the foreground and pot. The still life was worked up on this substrate, through which the dark layer shows a little, probably in a single session, in the course of which Van Gogh gradually thickened the paint, mainly in the chives, and used slightly brighter colours – violet, yellow-orange and blue-green – a distinctive palette which he retained in his later paintings in the *à l'essence* technique (cats. 85-90, 94). Violet, (yellow) orange and (blue) green are the secondary colours from the colour circle, that is to say the colours obtained by mixing two of the primary colours (red, blue, yellow). In theory Van Gogh could have mixed those colours with the paints that were already part of his palette, but instead

6 This plant is far less common in the Netherlands, which is probably why the work was described neutrally as 'Small flowerpot with grasses' ('Bloempotje met grasjes') in Amsterdam 1905, no. 36.
7 On this see cat. 72, note 1.
8 The pattern recurs in the background decoration to *Carafe and dish with citrus fruit* (cat. 89) and *Piles of French novels and roses in a glass ('Romans parisiens')* (F 359 JH 1332; fig. 134c), although in the latter it is horizontal, not vertical. It was the critic Gustave Kahn who called it an 'oriental carpet' when the latter work was exhibited in 1888 ('Peinture: exposition des Indépendans', *La Revue Indépendante*, 18 April 1888, p. 163).



79b Detail of photograph of the drawing room of Jo van Gogh-Bonger's apartment at Koninginneweg 77, Amsterdam, c. 1915. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum. Flowerpot with garlic chives hangs in the corner, top left of the chimney-piece.

he chose to buy them ready-made from a colourman. The consistent colour of the tube paints created a more decorative effect, and whether or not he intended it that was also one of the goals of the Neo-Impressionists.

Van Gogh chose cobalt violet for the violet colour. It has been identified in the background paint, but he would also have applied it in other areas, such as the chives.[9] As far as we know he only used it in the early months of 1887. Later (in cats. 98, 100, 125, 135, 136, for example) he replaced this stable pigment with more fugitive mixtures of blue and cochineal on a tin substrate. He used cerulean blue for the blue-green in this still life, a pigment which contemporaries said was difficult to work with.[10] For yellow-orange he seems to have employed a commercially prepared mixture of cadmium yellow and above all Kopp's purpurin (see cat. 89). These colours recur throughout the scene: in the chives, the shadow cast by the flowerpot, and the pattern in the background, where the blue-green is combined with the complementary red earth. The result is not harsh, despite the pronounced use of colour. The bright colours were only applied on the soft base tone locally. In addition, they were all placed beside each other with very delicate strokes, as can be seen in the chives, where they merge into a lively, gentle green when seen from a little distance.

The signature was added when the painting was dry. It was originally red, but wear and the fading of the organic pigment has left just a pale pink which does not stand out at all (fig. 79c). The paint layer is also badly worn elsewhere, particularly in the background and in the top part of the chives, leaving them looking as if they have been trimmed in an almost straight line.



79c Detail of cat. 80.

9 This is discussed on p. 138.
10 On this topic see pp. 129, 130.

Cat. 79

PROVENANCE
1887-91 T. van Gogh ; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1917-19 on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam?; 1925-52 V.W. van Gogh; 1952-60 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1960-62 Theo van Gogh Foundation; 1962 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1962-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

LITERATURE
Bonger 1890, no. 30 [Bourriches d'oignons] or no. 36 [Bourriches des bulbes]; De la Faille 1928, vol. I, pp. 94, 95, vol. 2, pl. XCI; Bremmer 1930, vol. 4, p. 25, cover ill.; De la Faille 1939, p. 214, no. 277; De la Faille 1970, pp. 159, 624; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 228; Hulsker 1977, pp. 271, 272; Hulsker 1980, pp. 271, 272; Amsterdam 1987, p. 331, no. 1.146; Hulsker 1996, pp. 270-72; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 67, 74, note 78; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 56, 285, 306.

EXHIBITIONS
1905 Amsterdam I, no. 67 [Dfl. 500]; 1926 The Hague, no. 120? [possibly cat. 81]; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 30? [possibly cat. 81]; 1926 Munich, no. 2082? (not for sale) [possibly cat. 81]; 1928-29 Hanover, Munich & Leipzig, no cat., no. 10, no cat. known; 1929 Utrecht, no. 17? [not for sale] [possibly cat. 81]; 1930 Amersfoort, no cat. known [possibly cat. 81]; 1932 Cologne, no cat. known; 1932 Manchester, no. 12; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 88; 1955 Antwerp, no. 172; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 84; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 17.

Cat. 80

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
De la Faille 1928, vol. I, p. 95, vol. 2, pl. XCII; De la Faille 1939, p. 237, no. 315; Tralbaut 1955 I, p. 36; Graetz 1963, p. 55; De la Faille 1970, pp. 160, 161, 624; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 108, 228; Hulsker 1977, p. 272; Hulsker 1980, p. 272; Amsterdam 1987, p. 331, no. 1.147; Hulsker 1996, p. 272; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, p. 137, note 55; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 69, 74, note 78; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 57, 306.

EXHIBITIONS
1905 Amsterdam I, no. 36 [Dfl. 450]; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 29; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 91; 1949-50 New York & Chicago, no. 54; 1953 The Hague, no. 79; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 70; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 31; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 26.

81
Basket of hyacinth bulbs

82
Three novels

81
Paris, January-February 1887
Oil on panel
31.2 x 48.3 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 63 V/1962
F 336 JH 1227

82
Paris, January-February 1887
Oil on panel
31.1 x 48.5 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 181 V/1962
F 335 JH 1226

The identical shapes, backgrounds and sizes of these two oval still lifes make it abundantly clear that they are pendants. One is of six flower bulbs, the other of three modern novels, all on a yellow background which is meant to be a cloth or tablecloth, judging by the long creases.[1]

The bulbs have usually been referred to as crocuses since 1905, but that is incorrect.[2] They are hyacinths, and unlike crocuses the bulbs rest on top of the earth (compare cat. 79), and the thicker, fleshy leaves do not sprout from the pellicle but from the bulb itself. Van Gogh observed their scaly structure and mother-of-pearl colour very well indeed.

Two of the three modern novels in the other still life have the yellow covers that were customary at the time. The one on top is Jean Richepin's *Braves gens*, with the author's name, the title, the subtitle *Roman parisien* and the number of the impression, 'septième', on the cover.[3] Further down the cover is a partly curled up bookseller's label with the word 'nouvelle' or 'nouveau' followed by an illegible second word beginning with an 'S'.[4] The empty compartment below it, the function of which is unclear, was originally pink but has now faded a little and become browner.[5] The label on it might indicate that the book came from a lending library.

Beneath *Braves gens* is Edmond de Goncourt's *La fille Elisa,* on the spine of which Van Gogh wrongly credited the book to both brothers, J. and Ed. de Goncourt. In green lettering at the very bottom is what appears to be an 'R'.[6] Behind these two books is a more expensive one: Emile Zola's *Au bonheur des dames* bound in gold-embossed red morocco that has discoloured to brown on the front, where Van Gogh probably used the same paint as he did for the brown area on the cover of Richepin's *Braves gens.*

Many authors have suggested that Van Gogh painted his *Three novels* in imitation of Paul Signac, who had made comparable paintings of modern novels in 1883, 1885 and 1887.[7] The similarity is indeed striking (fig. 81a), but it is debatable

1 The paintings are listed under numbers 27 ('Livres') and 30 ('Bourriches des oignons') or 36 ('Bourriches des bulbes') in the 1890 inventory of Theo's collection. The initial identification was based on the knowledge that a negative of an early photograph of the books was numbered '27' (reproduced in De la Faille 1928, vol. 2, pl. XC, and De la Faille 1939, no. 246). No paint residues of an earlier annotation were found on the painting, so we have assumed that the number was on the negative. Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov read it as '87' in Paris 1988, p. 55, and thought that that was the date, 1887, as did the editors of Amsterdam 1987, p. 330, no. 1.144. Dorn 1999, p. 46, note 1, was the first to draw attention to the number on the Bonger list, the handwriting of which does not resemble that of Jo van Gogh-Bonger or of her brother Andries.

2 Amsterdam 1905, no. 86 ('Mandje met crocussen'). It is known that this really was a reference to cat. 81 from a list made by Jo van Gogh-Bonger (b 5422) in which the painting is described as 'oval'.

3 All that is written on the spine is the author's name, which is probably preceded by an 'A' (his full name was Jean Auguste-Jules Richepin). There is also a star-shaped vignette on the spine, but it bears no resemblance to that of the actual publisher, Maurice Dreyfous.

4 The word may be 'Série'.

5 This impression does indeed exist, but since no copies of the second to the sixth impressions have been found it can be assumed that this was not the seventh but the second impression, which the publisher called the seventh for commercial reasons.

6 This letter cannot be associated with any of the publishers of the book.

7 This was first suggested by A.M. Hammacher in London 1962, pp. 91-93, but rejected by Sund 1992, p. 147. For Signac's paintings see Cachin/Ferretti-Bocquillon 2000, p. 157, no. 53, p. 164, no. 83, and p. 178, no. 134.



81 Basket of hyacinth bulbs



82 Three novels



81a Paul Signac, *Still life. A yellow book*, 1887. Private collection.

whether he did in fact imitate the French Pointillist. The resemblance between the paintings is probably coincidental. Van Gogh's *Still life with Bible* of 1885 shows that he had no need of examples of how to depict books, and it is also very doubtful that he knew Signac well enough in the first few months of 1887 to be invited to his studio.

Van Gogh regarded *Au bonheur des dames*, which he had read in 1883, the year of its publication, as one of the French writer's most beautiful books.[8] He says nothing in his letters about Richepin's *Braves gens, roman parisien* of 1886, but he clearly had a high opinion of the author.[9] He was a long-time admirer of the works of the De Goncourt brothers, and first mentions Edmond's *La fille Elisa*, which was published in 1877, in a letter of 1887, when he was living in Paris, although that does not necessarily mean that he only read it then, as has been suggested.[10]

One factor common to the three novels is that they are largely set in contemporary Paris and revolve around a love story, as do so many novels. *Braves gens* is about the marginal existence of artists and their happy and unhappy love affairs.[11] *La fille Elisa* is the dramatic story of a maidservant who murders her lover.[12] *Au bonheur des dames*, which is part of Zola's *Les Rougon-Macquart* series, describes the affairs of the owner of a department store who ends up by falling in love with one of his female employees.[13]

Modern novels and sprouting flower bulbs make an odd combination, but it can be explained from Van Gogh's attitude to life, or view of the world, if one prefers, in which both French naturalism and nature itself played key roles.[14] The Realist movement fulfilled what Van Gogh considered to be the human duty of facing up to modern life and drawing one's own conclusions from it, or as he himself wrote: 'to see modern life as bright despite its inevitable sadnesses' [829]. One could not get a grip on life or on the point of life without that ennobling task, but it was equally important to understand nature in all its facets. Van Gogh was fascinated above all by things growing, flowering and dying, because that embodied 'something on High' [401].[15]

Given these ideas, the sprouting bulbs were undoubtedly chosen in order to symbolise the constantly recurring, eternal forces of life in nature, while the modern novels allude to the need to understand the world around one.[16] Van Gogh returned to this subject in his *Piles of French novels and roses in a glass ('Romans parisiens')* and *Still life with plaster statuette and books* of the autumn of 1887 (figs. 134c, 57e), although there the two motifs were combined in single paintings rather than being

8 See letters 333, 464, 604 (which was written when he was rereading the book), 669 and 720.
9 In letter 574 he wrote: 'The work of the French naturalists Zola, Flaubert, Guy de Maupassant, De Goncourt, Richepin, Daudet, Huysmans is magnificent and one can scarcely be said to belong to one's time if one isn't familiar with them'.
10 Van Gogh mentions it in a letter of the summer or autumn of 1887 [574]. See further Sund 1992, p. 117.
11 Van Uitert 1983, pp. 72-76, and Van der Veen 2009, pp. 180, 181.
12 Sund 1992, pp. 134-36, 240.
13 Ibid., pp. 85-87, and Van der Veen 2009, pp. 174, 175.
14 His admiration for French naturalism is discussed in Sund 1992, pp. 13-163, Van der Veen 2003, and Van der Veen 2009, pp. 101-49.
15 See Van Tilborgh 1998, pp. 40-45.
16 This is at odds with what Sund wrote. She believed that in these two panels Van Gogh 'apparently [wanted] to express the energy, fecundity, and promise of renewal that the artist found in modern literature' (Sund 1992, p. 146). Van Gogh had already explored the subjects isolated in the present catalogue in two related drawings from his Hague period: *Man standing, reading a book* (F 1683 JH 279) and *Prayer before the meal* (F 1002 JH 281). The import there is simply more traditional, more Christian than in *Three novels* and *Basket with hyacinth bulbs*. In F 1683 JH 271 the man is reading a Bible, not a novel (see letter 294), and in F 1002 JH 281 the search for 'something on High' is not symbolised by burgeoning life but by a man in prayer.



81b Reverse of cat. 81.



81c Reverse of cat. 82.

spread over companion pieces.[17] There were no sprouting flower bulbs at that time of the year, so Van Gogh chose roses to symbolise 'nature'. The subject continued to fascinate him. He depicted it twice in Arles, replacing the roses with a flowering almond branch and oleanders.[18] In addition, while he was in the asylum in Saint-Rémy he said that he wanted to paint a bookshop window filled with novels 'between an olive grove and a wheatfield' [823], which shows that his old aim of bringing 'nature' and 'the novel' together in one painting had lost none of its relevance.

It is very conceivable that Van Gogh worked on both paintings at the same time. They have the unusual supports of wood from Japanese chests.[19] The name of the same supplier is on the backs of both panels (figs. 81b, 81c), when read from right to left, as usual in Japan: 起立工商会社 (kiritsu kōshō kaisha, the Kiritsu trading company). This company, which had factories in Tokyo, was founded in 1873 by the Japanese merchant Wakai Kenzaburō with the aim of selling Japanese products and art in western Europe, and opened a branch in Paris in 1878 which went bankrupt in 1891.[20]

Van Gogh did not sand down the rather battered panels, which are disfigured by many dents and scratches. He may have felt that a worn surface was a more pleas-

17 For the latter works see cat. 134.
18 Those two works are F 393 JH 1362 and F 593 JH 1566.
19 Kind communication from Matthi Forrer (Leiden, Museum Volkenkunde). It is probably cherry-wood. For a long time it was thought that the supports were the lids of Japanese tea chests, an idea that was first mooted in De la Faille 1970, p. 160, and adopted by almost everyone after that.
20 Kōdera 2006, p. 11, with further information in Koyama-Richard 2001, pp. 39, 40, note 8, and Put 2000, pp. 76, 77. The firm would not have been unknown to Theo, for the Japanese merchant Tadamasa Hayashi, who had previously worked for the Kiritsu trading company, was an acquaintance of his friends, Michel Manzi among them; see Kōdera 2006.

ing starting point for a painting than a 'virginal' canvas or panel, because it would have been very similar to the canvases he reused in 1886, some of which he did not even scrape off before painting another scene on top (cats. 51, 69), and even when he did he only painted a cursory foundation layer on them (cats. 75, 77). Nor did he apply any grounds to these two, which ties in with his recently developed taste for porous supports like unprimed *carton* (cat. 85) and canvas.[21] The wood of *Three novels* is almost entirely covered with paint, and only shows through a little in the creases of the tablecloth and in the shadows cast by the books on the left. Van Gogh used the panel more directly in the still life with hyacinths as the base tone for the basket and, to a slightly lesser extent, for the bulbs.

He chose an identical background in order to match the paintings to each other. It is a yellowish green containing a lot of chrome yellow. However, the relationship between the background and the still life is different in the two works. The dominant feature in *Basket of hyacinth bulbs* (cat. 81) is the tonal contrast between the dark basket and the light background. In reality the basket was obviously not very bright, so Van Gogh kept the background subdued by mixing the chrome yellow with white and other colours to temper it. The present tonal contrast is a little stronger than Van Gogh intended, as the wood has darkened through a natural ageing process and as a result of absorbing oil and varnish. The starting point of the other painting (cat. 82) was the red and yellow of the two topmost books, and their pronounced colours removed the need to tone the background down with white. Accordingly, there are barely any tonal contrasts. Apart from the red there are mainly yellows which only differ from each other in intensity and hue. The yellow in the books, for instance, is warmer and brighter than that in the tablecloth, where strokes of chrome yellow alternate with very pale blue.

Van Gogh worked from the dark hues (of the wood) to the light in both paintings. He began with the still life and then alternated between the background and the main subject, matching the tones and colours of the different passages to each other. Buttery paints were applied very thinly, often beside and on top of each other, but never mixed. The unprepared wood of the support came in handy there, for the oil was immediately taken up by the wood, with the absorbent surface ensuring that the paint dried quickly.

The unprepared wood had yet another advantage. When a painter works on a light surface it is difficult to predict what effect the colours mixed on a wooden palette will have.[22] The artist has to anticipate the colour of that surface when mixing the paints, and Van Gogh now had no need to make that mental translation, for the colours displayed themselves on his palette just as they would on the wooden support of the painting. He later deliberately prepared some reused canvases with a palette-coloured ground (cats. 111, 112, 114, 116-20).

The brushwork is different in both still lifes. Van Gogh used the delicate, parallel strokes in *Basket of hyacinth bulbs* mainly to model, as he had done with the still life of crocus bulbs (cat. 79). However, here his pronounced brushstrokes take on a life of their own in the background. They undulate around the basket. This emphatic brushwork, and the fact that the background paint was the last to be applied over the contours of the basket, and thus frames it sharply, brings the background forward optically – so much so, in fact, that the still life nearly sinks into it.

21 F 354 JH 1270. With thanks to Kristin Hoermann Lister, paintings conservator at The Art Institute of Chicago, for confirming that this is the case.
22 Callen 2000, pp. 65, 66.

The brushwork is far from spontaneous in the background of the still life with books (cat. 82). There is a series of systematic, horizontal strokes that is indebted to Neo-Impressionism. The artists working in that style often used the repetitive brushstroke uncompromisingly, which reduced the sense of recession into depth. Van Gogh wanted to avoid that, so in order to create a spatial effect he painted the tablecloth with less pronounced brushwork in the background than in the foreground. He also blurred it in the background by dabbing paint with his fingertips. That, coupled with the fact that the bright, warm colours of the still life come forward strongly, is why the suggestion of space is more convincing in this still life than in the one with the hyacinth bulbs.

Cat. 81

PROVENANCE
1887-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1917-19 on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam?; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1926 on loan to the Museum Mesdag, The Hague; 1927-30 on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; 1962 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1931-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

LITERATURE
Bonger 1890, no. 36 [Bourriches des bulbes] or no. 30 [Bourriches d'oignons]; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 95, vol. 2, pl. XCII; De la Faille 1939, p. 214, no. 276; Baard 1946, p. 17; De la Faille 1970, pp. 160, 624; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 192, 228; Hulsker 1977, pp. 271, 272, 274; Hulsker 1980, pp. 271, 272, 274; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 190, 191, 330, no. 1.145; Bohde/Gutbrod 1990, pp. 38, 39; Sund 1992, pp. 123, 146, 147; Hulsker 1996, pp. 270-72, 274; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 74, note 80; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 56, 284, 307.

EXHIBITIONS
1905 Amsterdam 1, no. 86 [Dfl. 500]; 1926 The Hague, no. 120? [possibly cat. 79]; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 30? [possibly cat. 79]; 1926 Munich, no. 2082? (not for sale) [possibly cat. 79]; 1929 Utrecht, no. 17? [not for sale] [possibly cat. 79]; 1930 Amersfoort, no cat. known [possibly cat. 79]; 1930 Amsterdam, no. 21; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 34; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 90; 1950 Hilversum, no. 20; 1954 Zürich, no. 14; 1954-55 Bern, no. 22; 1961 Humlebæk, no. 75; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 13; 1976-77 Tokyo, Kyoto & Nagoya, no. 37; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2001 Norfolk, no cat.

Cat. 82

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
Bonger 1890, no. 27 [Livres]; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 95, vol. 2, pl. XC; De la Faille 1939, p. 194, no. 246; Nordenfalk 1947, p. 142; London 1962, pp. 92, 93; De la Faille 1970, pp. 160, 624; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 49, 50, 62, note 84, 161, 162, 192, 230, 238; Hulsker 1977, pp. 271, 272, 274; Hulsker 1980, pp. 271, 272, 274; Van Uitert 1983, pp. 74-76; Osaka 1986, p. 120, no. 37; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 190, 191, 330, no. 1.144; Paris 1988, pp. 148, 149, no. 55; Kyoto/Tokyo 1992, pp. 68, 69, no. 6; Sund 1992, pp. 123, 142, 144-47; Hulsker 1996, pp. 270-72, 274; Ten-Doesschate Chu 1996, p. 86; Tokyo 1996, pp. 56, 57, 140, no. 6; Sund 2000, p. 194, ill. 176; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 74, note 80; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 56, 284.

EXHIBITIONS
1896-97 Paris, no cat. [Ffr. 300] [possibly cat. 134 or F 359 JH 1332]; 1929 Utrecht, no. 18? [not for sale]; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 41; 1948 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 89; 1954-55 Bern, no. 16; 1955 Antwerp, no. 168; 1986 Osaka, no. 37; 1988 Paris, no. 55; 1992 Kyoto & Tokyo, no. 6; 1996 Tokyo, no. 6; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 36; 2005 Tokyo, Osaka & Nagoya, no. 50.

83
Portrait of Agostina Segatori

Paris, January-February 1887
Oil on canvas
26.5 x 21.1 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 93 V/1962
F 215b JH 1205

This small painting was not included in the first two editions of De la Faille's oeuvre catalogue because it and two other female portraits (cats. 53, 54) did not surface in the family collection until the early 1950s, when all three of them were dated to Van Gogh's Antwerp period.[1] In 1953, however, De la Faille said that that was impossible, and in the manuscript of the new edition of his catalogue he moved them all to Paris,[2] which is how they were first published in 1970.[3]

However, the editors of that 1970 edition did not agree with De la Faille. They accepted only the present portrait as a Paris work, and doubted the authenticity of the other two (cats. 53, 54). That led to the total rejection of the last two in later publications, whereupon the compilers of the museum's 1987 collection catalogue dismissed cat. 83 as well, on the grounds that to do otherwise would be inconsistent.[4] That opinion was then adopted by Hulsker, who omitted the painting from his 1996 oeuvre catalogue.[5]

The underlying, unexpressed reason was that these female portraits are quite small and as such would have occupied an unusual position in Van Gogh's oeuvre, and one that was difficult to explain.[6] The two that were doubted in 1970 (cats. 53, 54) are restored to the oeuvre in the present catalogue, and nor are there any doubts about this, the third one. Its small size – *figure* 3 (27 x 22 cm) – may be a little uncommon for Van Gogh but is not exceptional (see cats. 52-54). Nor are there any stylistic reasons for dismissing it. The use of long, rapidly painted dashes of thin paint, by the ear, for example, is also found in *Basket of crocus bulbs* (cat. 79), while the forehead is modelled in exactly the same way as that of the woman in *In the café* (cat. 84), with stiff paint being pushed into small relief lines with a hard brush.

De la Faille believed that the portrait was painted in the first half of 1886,[7] but the more delicate, differentiated brushwork points to a later date, as already indicated by the comparison with the latter two works of 1887. In combination with the thin paint, the brushwork is very reminiscent of portraits by Toulouse-Lautrec (fig. 83a),[8] which is why we have dated this picture to the early months of that year, when Van Gogh began working in his friend's style.[9] In addition, the grey-blue background contains red lead – an orange-red pigment which he first started using around now.[10]

This new dating also fits in with the assumed identity of the woman in the portrait. Welsh-Ovcharov suggested that she is Agostina Segatori (1841-1910), the

1 On this see cats. 52-54, note 2.
2 Ibid., note 3.
3 See cats. 52-54.
4 Amsterdam 1987, p. 365. This was not backed by any arguments, but Han van Crimpen, the curator at the time, gave the above explanation of the reasoning in a telephone conversation in November 2003.
5 It was also rejected in Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424.
6 Kind communication from Han van Crimpen, see note 4.
7 De la Faille 1970, p. 113.
8 For the Toulouse-Lautrec portraits see Murray 1991, pp. 90-96. The restorer J.C. Traas treated our cat. 83 in 1929, and it is no accident that he attributed it to Toulouse-Lautrec, albeit hesitantly: 'Lautrec (?). Klein bleek vrouwenkopje' (b 4208).
9 Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 224, dated it to the second half of 1886, which was repeated in Toronto/Amsterdam 1981, p. 101, note 2. On the beginning of the friendship between Van Gogh and Toulouse-Lautrec see pp. 74-76.
10 On this see p. 134.



83 Portrait of Agostina Segatori



83a Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Portrait of Jeanne Wenz*, 1886. Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago, Mr and Mrs Lewis Larned Coburn Memorial Collection.



83b August Hagborg, *Portrait of Agostina Segatori*, c. 1875-80. Private collection.

manageress of Le Tambourin café and restaurant.[11] She was a former artists' model whom Van Gogh got to know in the winter of 1886-87 and with whom he had an affair.[12] The identification is based on an early portrait of her by the Swedish painter August Hagborg (fig. 83b) and Van Gogh's own *In the café* (cat. 84), in which a woman with a cigarette between her fingers and a drink beside her is depicted in Le Tambourin. It is also assumed that she is the woman in that painting, and she certainly looks very similar to the person in this small portrait. She has the same

11 Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 224, fig. 12a, on p. 290, with additional arguments put forward in Toronto/Amsterdam 1981, pp. 100, 101. On Segatori as Hagborg's model see also Nordenfalk 1948, p. 113. A note written by Annet Tellegen in the documentation file of cat. 83 in the Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD) in The Hague states that the sitter is Marie Murer, the sister of the collector Eugène. That, though, is unlikely, because her hair was different and she had much thicker eyebrows, as can be seen in a photograph of 1893; see Gachet 1956, fig. 84, after p. 168.

12 For their affair see cats. 84, 102, and letters 571, 572, 573, note 13, 682, note 12. It is not known precisely how long it lasted. All we know is that in July 1887 Van Gogh had not seen her for a long time but was still fond of her: 'I still feel affection for her and I hope she still feels some for me' [572]. Hulsker 1985, p. 386, took the word 'affection' to mean that they had not had a physical relationship, but that is incorrect. Paul Gauguin, for example, wrote in his *Avant et après*, Paris 1923, p. 177, that Van Gogh had been 'very much in love with La Segatori' ('très amoureux de la Siccatore'), and Bernard too left absolutely no doubt that they had been lovers (Bernard 1994, vol. 1, p. 242).
The information about Agostina Segatori herself is limited. Coquiot 1923, p. 126, reported that she was 'a former model of Gérôme's and of some other well-known painters' ('[...] un ancien modèle de Gérôme et de quelques autres peintres notoires'), while Bernard wrote that she had posed for Camille Corot (Bernard 1994, vol. 1, p. 242). Neither assertion is easy to substantiate. In Moreau-Nélaton/Robaut 1905, vol. 3, p. 114, no. 1562, there is a painting of 1866 of an Italian woman called 'Agostina' (now in Washington, National Gallery of Art), but it is impossible to say whether it is indeed a portrait of Segatori at the age of 24. The painting was on the Paris art market around 1900, so it is not impossible that Bernard knew it.
In Rouart/Wildenstein 1975, vol. 1, pp. 46, 47, no. 29, it is stated that Segatori posed for Manet, which was picked up and repeated by Zemel 1997, p. 112. That was based on notes by Léon Leenhoff to the effect that the model for Manet's study of c. 1878, *L'Italienne*, was one 'mère Secator' (kind communication from Juliet Wilson-Bareau, and with thanks to Inge Dupont, The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York). She does not look like Van Gogh's lover as we know her from paintings (see cat. 84, fig. 83b), so this must be another woman.
Segatori had posed not only for August Hagborg (see note 11) but also for Edouard Dantan, whose mistress she became in the 1870s. According to Sophie de Juvigny in Juvigny 2002, pp. 38-40, they even had a son in 1873 whom the artist refused to recognise (with thanks to Richard Thomson for this reference). Segatori's relationship with Dantan ended in 1884 when she married someone called Gustave Julien Morière, whose surname her son Jean-Pierre took. Agostina Segatori was living with her son when she died in 1910, as we know from her death certificate, a copy of which is in the Van Gogh Museum.
For the sake of completeness it should be mentioned that when the artist Adolphe Albert visited Le Tambourin in the 1880s he wrote that Segatori was said to be the mistress of someone called 'Ravant[?]' (b 3331, note from 1922). Finally, Van Gogh wrote in July 1887 that he was convinced that she had 'had an abortion (unless of course she had a miscarriage)' [572], and he was undoubtedly referring to her liberated and loose nature when he wrote to his sister Willemien in the autumn of 1887 saying that he was 'still continually [having] the most impossible and highly unsuitable love affairs from which, as a rule, I emerge only with shame and disgrace' [574].



83c Reverse of cat. 83.

fringe, brownish eyes, wiry hair in the neck and identical lips. In addition, the woman in the small study has an earlobe as large as the one in Hagborg's painting, while all three women are of a fairly similar type, with close similarities between the eyes, eyebrows and mouths. Van Gogh was having great trouble finding models at the time, so this woman can only be someone who was a close acquaintance, which makes it almost certain that she and the woman in *In the café* (cat. 84) are Agostina Segatori.

The small canvas was undoubtedly an initial, autonomous exploration of Segatori's face, and it was only after he had made it that Van Gogh dared embark on the ambitious and more carefully planned portrait of her in Le Tambourin (cat. 84). Theo may have been thinking of both these works when he wrote to his mother at the end of February 1887 telling her that 'he has painted a couple of portraits that turned out well, but he always does it for nothing. It's a shame that he doesn't have any desire to start earning, because if he wanted to he could do it here; but one can't change a person'.[13]

The painting, which has not been lined but is no longer on its original stretcher, is on a ready-prepared canvas from the colourman A. Fermine at 37 rue Notre-Dame-de-Lorette. The firm's stamp is on the back, together with the number 3 denoting the standard size of the canvas (p. 104, fig. 13, and fig. 83c) (Table 3.5, no. 55). The ground is unusual. The first layer must have been applied, probably commercially, to a larger roll from which this piece was cut.[14] Once the canvas was mounted on its *figure* 3 stretching frame, the surface to be painted was given a second, whiter ground layer, either by the supplier or the artist himself.

Van Gogh first applied a thin translucent underpaint that is still clearly visible in the background, the clothing and the hair, with the white ground supplying the luminosity. He did not wait until this *ébauche* had dried properly, but worked it up, wet-into-wet, his lively, mostly short brushstrokes mixing with the underpaint.

13 Letter of 28 February 1887 (b 906): '[...] een paar portretten die goed zijn uitgevallen' [...] 'hij doet het altijd voor niets. Het is jammer dat hij geen lust krijgt om wat te gaan verdienen, want als hij het wilde zou hij het hier wel kunnen; maar men kan een mensch niet veranderen'.

14 The absence of primary cusps around the edges of the canvas, which form where a roll was fixed to the commercial priming frame, suggest that it was cut from the middle part of the roll.

It was still wet at the time, for the light ground can be seen at those points where the paint was pushed aside by the stiff hairs of the brush.

The woman's brown-black dress was prepared with a layer of organic red, which is particularly visible at the bottom edge of the painting. Van Gogh modelled loosely with black on top of it, and did not use a mixture of all sorts of bright pigments mixed together but pure bone black. Yet there is a lively effect all the same, because the black mixed with the red underneath to give the dress a scarlet appearance when viewed in the right light. Finally, he reinforced the modelling with some grey strokes. The dark background consists of a thin black base with a layer of blue-grey on top that looked cool against the reddish dress. Van Gogh repeated that colour contrast with blue and red accents in the woman's black hair, but the latter effect can no longer be seen, since the blue passages now look greenish due to the severely yellowed varnish.

Degradation of the red has changed its nature here and there. The woman's face is pale, apart from a strong orange-pink touch in the ear, and since that looks unnatural one suspects that Van Gogh used an organic red here that has faded away completely. It usually does so when it is used thinly, as in the woman's lips, which are now very pallid, or when it is mixed with white, as it was in the face. The red was applied more thickly in the dress and in the contours between the lips and around the eye, and there it has retained its colour. The originally pinkish flesh colours would have contrasted well with the cool, thinly painted shadow tones, to which blue was added, as can be seen under the microscope. This was an old technique of Van Gogh's (cats. 46, 48).

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Not in De la Faille 1928; not in De la Faille 1939; De la Faille 1970, pp. 110, 113, 597, 619; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 89, 149, 150, 224; Hulsker 1977, p. 266; Hulsker 1980, p. 266; Amsterdam 1987, p. 365, no. 1.262; Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424; not in Hulsker 1996; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 117, 124; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 45, 68, 72, note 19, p. 74, note 72.

Exhibitions
1948-49 The Hague, no. 50; 1998-99 Enschede, no cat.

84
In the café: Agostina Segatori in Le Tambourin

Paris, January-March 1887
Oil on canvas
55.5 x 47.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 17 V/1962
F 370 JH 1208

Underlying image: bust of a woman (fig. 84d)
After December 1885 or March 1886

This painting is Van Gogh's first exploration of one of the stock subjects in the repertoire of the French Realists and Impressionists: a woman drinking alone. It was Degas who started it off with his *In a café (L'absinthe)* of 1875-76 (Paris, Musée d'Orsay). This was followed by Manet's *Plum brandy* of 1878 (fig. 84a), and from then on no young artist who wanted to depict modern life could avoid the subject, possibly without even having seen those imposing examples.[1] Toulouse-Lautrec seized on the subject at the very start of his career, and his first experiments in the genre, such as *A la Bastille (Jeanne Wenz)* of 1886 (fig. 84b), encouraged Van Gogh to try his hand at it as well.[2] He was immediately successful, but his chronic lack of models prevented him from following it up, although he did deal indirectly with the theme of the solitary drinker another four times.[3]

The woman is sitting at a small table with a mug of beer beside her.[4] The two saucers underneath the mug show that it is her second drink, and judging by the size it is a half-pint. A cigarette smoulders between the fingers of her left hand; her right hand is free to pick up the full beer mug, beside which there is a matchstick holder, with sides that could be used to strike a match.[5] The table is in the shape of a tambourine, as are the two stools in the left and right foreground. They identify the setting as Le Tambourin, the café, restaurant and cabaret venue at 62 boulevard de Clichy which the Italian Agostina Segatori opened in 1885 (see cat. 83).[6] She was Van Gogh's lover at the time this portrait was painted, but strangely enough she was not recognised as being the sitter for a long time. Jo van Gogh-Bonger merely referred to the painting around 1891 as 'portrait of a woman at a table', so she clearly did not know the woman's identity.[7] De la Faille did not know it either in 1928, and it was not until 1954 that it was suggested that this was the manageress of Le Tambourin, and that was then widely accepted (see also cat. 83).[8]

Segatori furnished the restaurant entirely around the theme of tambourines. There were paintings of them on the walls, as well as descriptions by writers. There were tambourine-shaped lamps and plates and, as Van Gogh's painting shows, 'oak tambourines serving as tables'.[9] The interior of the restaurant is not really defined in the painting. Segatori is depicted against a wall which appears to have blue-green panelling, the lower part of which has been left vague. The chairs in the background

1 The subject is discussed in Thomson 1979. For the reputation of Degas's *L'Absinthe* see Kendall 2009, pp. 309-11.
2 For Toulouse-Lautrec's depictions of solitary figures sitting at café tables, not all of whom are drinking, see Dortu 1971, vol. 2, nos. 274, 278, 307, 308, 328, 340, 348. Murray 1991, pp. 245-48, dates these works to 1886-87.
3 In cat. 90, F 1392 JH 1218, F 549 JH 1572 and F 549a JH 1573. For the dating of the last two works to 1887 see cat. 136, note 12.
4 Beer only became as acceptable as wine in cafés in the closing decades of the 19th century; see De Langle 1990, p. 197.
5 For the different types of matchstick holders see Postma 2005, pp. 29, 30, 42-45, 65-84.
6 According to Coquiot 1923, pp. 126, 127, the café opened here on 10 April 1885. Bernard placed it incorrectly in boulevard Rochechouart (Bernard 1924, p. 242), while Paul Gachet Jr believed that the restaurant first opened its doors at 27 rue de Richelieu (Gachet 1928, pp. 5, 18, 20). On the café and Segatori see also cat. 102 and Toronto/Amsterdam 1981, pp. 100, 101.
7 Bonger 1890, no. 80[bis]: 'portrait de femme à table'. The different handwriting shows that this work was added to the inventory later by Theo's widow. He had probably not told her about Vincent's affair. At any rate she did not mention Segatori in her introduction to Van Gogh's correspondence.
8 Tralbaut 1954, p. 20. His suggestion was repeated by Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 225, and was followed up in Toronto/Amsterdam 1981, pp. 100, 101. Florent Fels had already asserted in his Van Gogh biography of 1928 that Segatori had posed for him (Fels 1928, p. 136).
9 '[...] tambourins de chêne formant table'. The quotation is from an advertisement for Le Tambourin of 1885 that is reproduced in Zemel 1997, p. 186, fig. 107. Coquiot 1923, pp. 128, 129, describes the café's artistic clientele.



84 In the café: Agostina Segatori in Le Tambourin



84a Edouard Manet, *Plum brandy*, 1878. Washington, National Gallery of Art, Collection of Mr and Mrs Paul Mellon.



84b Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *A la Bastille (Jeanne Wenz)*, 1886. Washington, National Gallery of Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

look as if they are too close to the wall and too small, but they do give the room depth, which Van Gogh evidently considered more important than their correct proportions or position. Although he had already displayed a preference for expressively receding lines in his early, Dutch work, he would have borrowed the idea of the oblique wall in this composition from Japanese prints, which he was now avidly collecting and in which long diagonals are the rule rather than the exception (fig. 84c; see also cats. 89, 90).[10]

Above the panelling the wall is divided into rectangular compartments which all differ from each other slightly in colour and size. Although it has been suggested that they represent paintings, in fact they are almost certainly Japanese prints.[11] Van Gogh only worked up the one on the right, which is of two geishas. He probably decided not to depict the others in detail so as not to make the background too restless. As already mentioned, Le Tambourin was decorated with works of art, but they did not include Japanese prints, as far as is known. What we do know is that Van Gogh held a selling exhibition of prints from his collection in the restaurant, and the painting suggests that we are seeing Segatori during that exhibition.[12]

It has not been possible to identify the print with the two geishas.[13] It is too large relative to the woman in the foreground to be a woodcut (which is why some authors have thought that it is a painting), but there is a practical explanation for this oddity. It is known from his later portraits of Père Tanguy, in which there are also Japanese woodcuts in the background, that Van Gogh copied the prints in their true size, and that would also be the case here.[14]

It has always been assumed that Segatori is in the Neapolitan costume worn by the waitresses in her restaurant, but that is not the case.[15] She is wearing ordinary

10 This was first suggested by Welsh-Ovcharov in Toronto/Amsterdam 1981, p. 100.
11 The suggestion that they are paintings of Japanese subjects was made in Osaka 1986, p. 116.
12 Van Gogh mentions this exhibition in letter 639.
13 Mabuchi 1985, p. 170, suggested that there is only one woman, and accordingly thought that this was the central print of a triptych by Utagawa Yoshitora from Van Gogh's own collection (Amsterdam 2006, no. 394, p. 274), which he reproduced in the background of his study for the portrait of Julien Tanguy (F 364 JH 1352; fig. 128e) and in a self-portrait from the second half of 1887 (F 319 JH 1333; fig. 129a).
14 F 363 JH 1351 (fig. 133a) and F 364 JH 1352 (fig. 128e). The partly cropped scene with the geishas in *In the café* measures 24 x 8.2 cm.
15 This assumption was first made by Welsh-Ovcharov in Toronto/Amsterdam 1981, p. 100.



84c Utagawa Kunisada, *An actor as the lady's maid Ohatsu*, 1853. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

clothes consisting of a waisted grey-green jacket and a black-blue skirt. She was evidently following the latest fashion, which dictated that women's clothes did not have to consist of a single garment.[16] The strikingly large hat has plumes, and was probably attached to the bun of her hair with pins. It is known from the other, smaller bust of her that she indeed wore her hair like that (see cat. 83).

The scene can be interpreted in several ways. It can be regarded as a portrait of Segatori in her own restaurant, but also as a genre piece in which Van Gogh merely used his lover as a model representing the type of woman who drank alone. In the first case he depicted her in accordance with the tried and trusted manner of the Realists, that is to say in her own working environment and in a characteristic pose, but against that she is not shown so much as the owner, or rather manageress of the establishment, but as a customer, for she is wearing a hat, and is sitting at a separate table with her parasol within reach, all of which makes this a picture of someone who is out enjoying herself.

Seen in that light, then, it is more of a genre piece in which Van Gogh followed the Realists in portraying the female customer in a café as a very independent-minded woman. He allows her to drink and smoke, which was absolutely not done by gentlewomen in public places. It was different in artistic circles, and women of loose morals did not observe that etiquette either.[17] This interpretation of the painting as a genre scene seems eminently reasonable, but nevertheless it is difficult to square it with the depictions of Japanese prints in the background, which appear to be rather too specific and personal as allusions to Van Gogh's exhibition in Le Tambourin to be included in a painting with a general message.

The following interpretation is also possible. Van Gogh started out by working on a portrait of his lover in her own establishment in which he chose the fitting background of his own exhibition of Japanese prints. The characterisation of his lover as a feminist *avant la lettre,* drinking and smoking, matched her liberated nature as a former artists' model and as the manageress of a café and restaurant with an artistic clientele. He probably made the first, very rough design of the portrait (on which see below) on the spot, but he then worked it up in the studio, where she arrived to be painted in her Sunday best (and probably without her parasol, which does not look as if it was observed from life and was evidently inserted at a late stage to add some life to the otherwise rather static composition). He was evidently not bothered by the resulting ambiguity of a manageress who is a customer in her own café, and in that respect the painting is allied to the portraits of Toulouse-Lautrec, who like Van Gogh wanted to explore the subject of women drinking alone but depicted them against the backdrop of his own studio (see fig. 90a). The fact that Segatori's portrait ended up looking like a genre scene was a bonus, for it gave the scene a meaning over and above that of a portrait.

An X-radiograph shows that the work was painted on top of a bust-length portrait of a woman (fig. 84d), the precise date of which is unclear.[18] Both the standard format and the weave characteristics identify this as a type of canvas that Van Gogh used in both Antwerp and Paris, but the single-layer ground consisting mainly of lead white is typical of his Paris work (Table 3.5, no. 54). However, since one Antwerp painting investigated has the same type of ground (cat. 48; Table 3.5,

16 With thanks to Bianca du Mortier (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam).
17 Zemel 1997, pp. 112, 113, asserted on the basis of Gronberg 1984, that 'her colorful clothing, her smoking and drinking, and her lingering in a café were enough to declare her non-bourgeois status and sexual availability', but it is unlikely that Van Gogh intended to portray his lover that way. It is all too easy to lump ladies of the night together with women from liberated, artistic circles. Zemel's interpretation is based on the knowledge that the Parisian 'brasseries à femmes', where beer was drunk and the customers were served by women, became almost synonymous with brothels in the course of the 1870s and 80s (see Clayton 1991, pp. 133-53).
18 Van Heugten 1995, p. 83. It is suggested in that publication that the woman may be the same one as in a portrait from Van Gogh's early months in Paris (F 273 JH 1116), which he also overpainted with another scene, although that is difficult to check. For the overpainting see Kōdera 1993, pp. 7, 8, 16-20.



84d X-radiograph of cat. 84.

no. 47), we cannot rule out the possibility that the underlying portrait is one of the missing works from that period.[19]

That scene was carefully scraped off before Van Gogh applied a covering layer of a warm, lively grey consisting of white, blue and various green and red pigments which was also used as a covering layer in two other works (cats. 104, 113). In contrast to those paintings, the grey in Segatori's portrait was not applied evenly throughout but in different hues. The thickness of the paint layer is varied, and sometimes the grey was painted in several layers of different tones in which Van Gogh anticipated the finished scene. For example, he used a slightly darker grey beneath the foremost hand which then served as the shadow tone when he modelled that hand loosely with fairly thin flesh colours (fig. 84e). The grey played a particularly important role in the background, where it was used to suggest Japanese prints, and it was also left clearly visible in the green-blue panelling and in the red edge of the table.

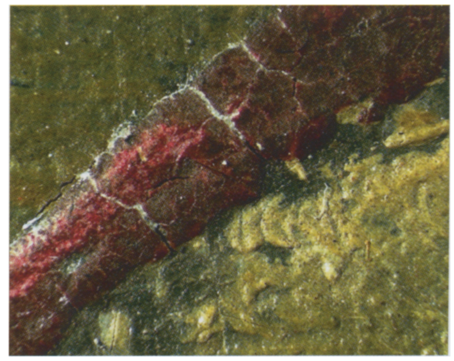
There is a similar monochrome preparation in the academic portraits that Van Gogh made when he first arrived in Paris (cats. 53, 54), but it is surprising that he reverted to this 'traditional' underpaint in more experimental paintings (see also cat. 132).[20] He evidently felt the need for a tonal lay-in for works in pure colour like this. We know from the X-radiograph (fig. 84d) and raking light photographs that he then painted the objects on the table with thick white paint without following his initial design absolutely faithfully.[21]

Once the underlayer was dry Van Gogh began working up the colours and modelling of the scene, probably in his studio, working mainly wet-into-wet and alternating between the portrait and the background. The first brushstrokes added white and bright cobalt blue to the grey in the background. The hands were then given an initial modelling with dark colours and the skirt was started with dark blue.

19 See cat. 45, note 1, and cats. 47-48, note 23.
20 An initial grey lay-in of this kind was not uncommon as an academic technique, and was also used by Toulouse-Lautrec, as shown by his 1883 portrait of Gustave Dennery (Dortu 1971, vol. 2, p. 98, no. 223, and Murray 1991, pp. 59, 60).
21 The saucers were eventually painted a little higher up and to the right, the matchstick holder was also raised a bit and the top of the table was lowered a little.



84e Detail of cat. 84 showing the grey underlayer in the hand.



84f Photomicrograph of deteriorated red lake contours in cat. 84.

The finish displays a strikingly varied handling of the paint similar to that in the *Portrait of Léonie Rose Charbuy-Davy* of almost the same period (cat. 96). The strokes are sometimes broad, sometimes small, and both short and long. The consistency of the paint varies from fluid to thick and stiff. In the latter case, Van Gogh wiped across the painted surface with an almost dry brush, as can be seen in the background. In addition, he occasionally rubbed some of the paint off in the background, revealing the structure of the canvas, which was part of his method at the time (see cats. 86, 89). He also made scratches in the paint here and there: near the hair of the geisha in the Japanese print on the right, on the bottom of the table and in the top left corner of the background. The contours of the figure, the chairs in the background and the table were reinforced locally with black or wine-red lines in order to model those forms more forcefully and have them stand out more prominently. Unfortunately, the latter pigment was a poor-quality organic red – cochineal lake on a tin substrate with a starch filler – which has aged very badly, with the result that it is now pale pink and has deep cracks (fig. 84f).

The brushwork in the face differs from that in the rest of the scene in that it was not treated like watercolour. The brown and green colours were admittedly applied fairly thinly in the shadows, but Van Gogh used stiff paint and a small, hard brush for the illuminated flesh colours, which were worked into each other carefully with small, short movements following the curves in the face, so that the paint is raised in small relief lines. As far as we have been able to make out this remarkable technique is not found anywhere else in Van Gogh's oeuvre apart from the small bust-length study of Segatori (cat. 83), although there the brushwork is slightly coarser.

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Bonger 1890, no. 80bis [Portrait de femme à table]; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 104, vol. 2, pl. CI; Bremmer 1930, vol. 4, pp. 29, 30, no. 30; De la Faille 1939, p. 227, no. 299; London etc. 1947-48, p. 29, no. 27; Nordenfalk 1948, p. 80; Tralbaut 1954, p. 20; Amsterdam 1958, no. 205; London 1962, p. 93; De la Faille 1970, pp. 172, 626; Orton 1971, p. 8, note 22, p.10, note 24; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 176, 195, 225, 247; Hulsker 1977, pp. 266-68, 288; Hulsker 1980, pp. 266, 267, 286; Toronto/Amsterdam 1981, pp. 100, 101, no. 3; Mabuchi 1985, p. 169; Tokyo/Nagoya 1985-86, pp. 178, 179, no. 60; Osaka 1986, p. 116, no. 33; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 200, 201, 330, no. 1.143; Paris 1988, pp. 86, 87, no. 24; Amsterdam 1990, pp. 90-92, no. 30; Van Lindert/Van Uitert 1990, pp. 58-60; Amsterdam 1991, p. 12; Murray 1991, p. 144; Kyoto/Tokyo 1992, pp. 62, 63, no. 3; Van Heugten 1995, p. 83, no. 18; Hulsker 1996, pp. 266, 267; Zemel 1997, pp. 112, 186; Kendall 1999, p. 34; Shackelford 2000, pp. 101, 102, 123, ill. 88; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 114, 117, 123, 124, 132, 136, note 26; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 57, 68, 72, note 19; Coyle 2007, p. 336; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 40, 286.

Exhibitions
1926 Munich, no. 2068? (not for sale); 1928 Berlin, no. 33; 1928 Frankfurt am Main, no. 22; 1928 Vienna, no. 20; 1928-29 Hanover, Munich & Leipzig, resp. no cat., no. 16, no cat. known; 1929 Utrecht, no. 24 [not for sale]; 1930 Amersfoort, no cat. known; 1930 London, no. 10; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 42; 1932 Manchester, no. 20; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1946 Maastricht & Heerlen, no. 35; 1946 Stockholm, Gothenburg & Malmö, no. 32; 1946 Copenhagen, no. 32; 1946-47 Liège, Brussels & Mons, no. 66; 1947 Paris, no. 67; 1947 Geneva, no. 68; 1947 Groningen, no. 42; 1947-48 London, Birmingham & Glasgow, no. 27; 1948 Bergen & Oslo, no. 19; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 101; 1949-50 New York & Chicago, no. 59; 1951 Lyon & Grenoble, no. 19; 1951 Arles, no. 19; 1951 Albi, no. 329; 1952 Enschede, no. 30; 1952 Eindhoven, no. 26; 1953 The Hague, no. 90; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 85; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 78; 1954 Zürich, no. 20; 1954-55 Willemstad, no. 10; 1955 Palm Beach, Miami & New Orleans, no. 10; 1955 Antwerp, no. 194; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 102; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 17; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 25; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 28; 1960-61 Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg & Toronto, no. 33; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 32; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 32; 1963 Sheffield, no. 7; 1963 Humlebæk, no. 23; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 23; 1965 Charleroi & Ghent, no. 14; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 19; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 39; 1968-69 London, no. 77; 1969-70 Los Angeles, Saint Louis & Philadelphia, no. 15; 1970-71 Baltimore, San Francisco & New York, no. 15; 1971-72 Paris, no. 48; 1972 Bordeaux, no. 12; 1972-73 Strasbourg & Bern, no. 13; 1976-77 Tokyo, Kyoto & Nagoya, no. 41; 1981 Toronto & Amsterdam, no. 3; 1985-86 Tokyo & Nagoya, no. 60; 1986 Osaka, no. 33; 1988 Paris, no. 24; 1990 Amsterdam, no. 30; 1992 Kyoto & Tokyo, no. 3; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2005 Washington & Chicago, no. 90; 2010-11 Tokyo, Fukuoka & Nagoya, no. 77.

85
Plaster cast of a woman's torso

86
Plaster cast of a woman's torso

87
Plaster cast of a woman's torso

85
Paris, February-March 1887
Oil on *carton*
33.0 x 24.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 75 V/1962
F 216i JH 1072

86
Paris, February-March 1887
Oil on canvas
40.8 x 27.1 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 199 V/1962
F 216g JH 1055

87
Paris, February-March 1887
Oil on canvas
41.0 x 32.8 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 200 V/1962
F 216h JH 1058

These three works, two on canvas and one on *carton*, are of plaster casts from Van Gogh's own collection, and are a return to the subject that he had explored in June the previous year (see cats. 57-63). The one on *carton* (cat. 85) is of his cast of a standing torso of Venus lacking her left leg after an unknown classical model (cf. cat. 60), while the two canvases are of his favourite statuette after the standing torso of Venus from the 1st or 2nd century AD (cf. cats. 58, 63).[1]

These paintings differ markedly from his previous treatments of the subjects. In 1886 he was experimenting with modelling using a loaded brush, but now he took a more draughtsman-like approach with paint that was not impasted or opaque but generally translucent. Almost all his previous studies after the casts were executed in grey and white, but he now adopted a brightly coloured palette. What is also striking is that in the previous exercises he only modelled the illuminated parts of the forms, with just rudimentary indications of the shaded passages. Here, though, they have received close attention.

The three works can be dated from Van Gogh's use of very thinned, almost watery paint which, together with the draughtsman-like brushstrokes and colourful palette, is also found in works like *Dish with citrus fruit*, *Café table with absinthe* and *Boulevard de Clichy* (cats. 88, 90, 94), all of which are from the early months of 1887. He used this technique in imitation of Toulouse-Lautrec,[2] who was only later to make a name for himself with his paintings 'in turpentine on *carton*, using a very liney method of drawing'.[3] Van Gogh also worked occasionally on other porous supports in this period, possibly due to shortage of money. Two are bare wood (cats. 81, 82), and one is unprimed canvas,[4] to which two of these three studies of casts are related in this respect. One (cat. 85) is on untreated *carton* of the standard *figure* 4 size, while the other (cat. 87) is on an extremely fine weave of canvas with a very thin lead-white ground, so it too is porous (Table 3.5, no. 60).

Van Gogh coupled his thinned oil paints with an intensive use of complementary, secondary colour contrasts (see cats. 79, 80), and that is also the case here. There is a lot of purple, for which Van Gogh made liberal use of the pigment cobalt violet (cats. 85-87 and p. 149, fig. 7), always in combination with orange-yellow and

1 He also recorded the torso of Venus with the missing leg in two drawings (Drawings 3, cats. 281 and 286), and the other one in five (Drawings 3, cats. 276-80).
2 In 1930 the restorer J.C. Traas actually thought that cats. 86, 87 were by Toulouse-Lautrec (b 4208).
3 Hartrick 1939, pp. 91, 92, quoted in Murray 1991, p. 89; see also ibid., pp. 184, 185, and esp. 15. Degas preceded Toulouse-Lautrec in the use of *peinture à l'essence*, but he applied the paint more opaquely. See Rouart 1988, pp. 26-34, for his inventive application of the technique.
4 F 354 JH 1270.



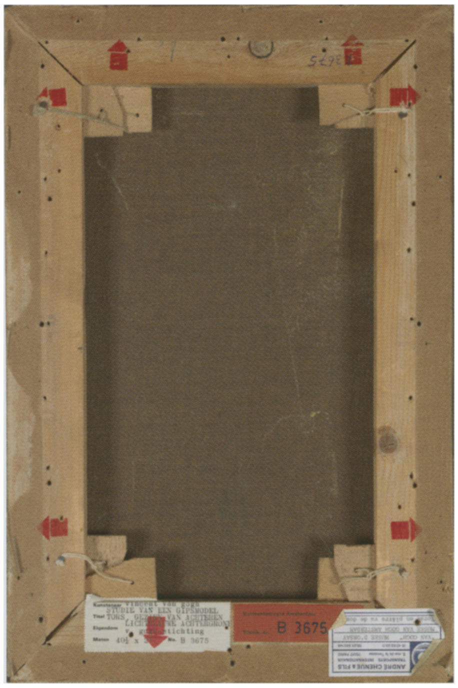
85 Plaster cast of a woman's torso



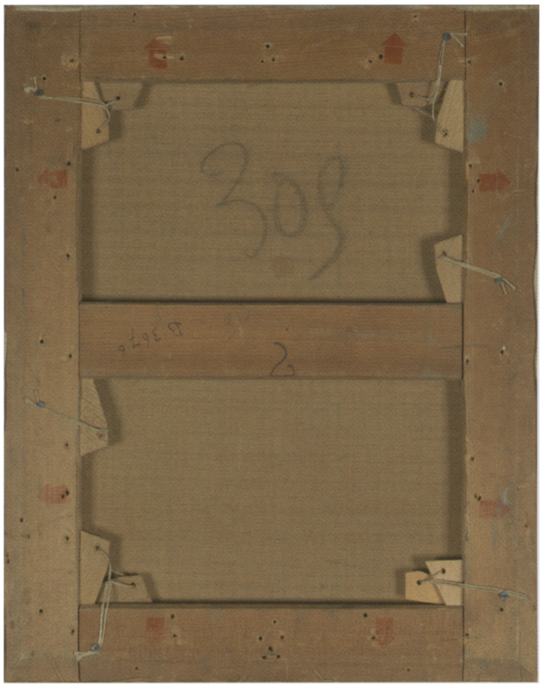
86 Plaster cast of a woman's torso



87 Plaster cast of a woman's torso



85a Reverse of cat. 86.



85b Reverse of cat. 87.

blue-green. For the latter he used the uncommon cerulean blue, which is identified in the background of cat. 87. He also worked with a lot of the cool, vivid viridian green (cats. 86, 87).

Between them, the cheap support, loose manner and many unconcealed improvements suggest that the work on *carton* (cat. 85) was the first of the three. The support was probably light beige in colour, which Van Gogh painted over thinly with white before modelling with thinned blue. He then added further detail with streaks and pronounced hatchings with cobalt violet. He also used the latter to hatch the background before filling it in loosely with thin blue and white. The cheap *carton* is now a dark orange as a result of ageing and sunken varnish, and that colour has worked through into the painting itself, seriously distorting the original colour relationships.

Cat. 86 is on a cheap kind of canvas (*étude* quality) and is the standard *basse paysage* 6 (27 x 41 cm) (Table 3.3, no. 5). It has been lined, but the stamped '6' on the back denoting the standard size shows vaguely through the lining canvas (fig. 85a). The double ground of lead white on chalk was only applied to the picture surface, and was kept relatively thick in order to make the coarse, open weave smooth (p. 104, fig. 15). Cat. 87 is a standard *figure* 6 but has a very fine weave. The thin ground consists of lead white and gypsum and was applied commercially (p. 104, fig. 14). This work has not been lined, and has retained its original stretcher and tensioning (fig. 85b). The residues of blue paint on the stretcher are probably identical to the blue in the background of the scene.

The two paintings on canvas clearly have greater pretensions than the study on *carton*. They have been carefully worked up with a close eye to detail. In cat. 86 Van Gogh began by delineating the figure with thin, pale pink, but only in the illuminated forms of the statuette. He left the ground uncovered in the shaded passages, which make up more than half of the torso. He then worked the figure up, giving the illuminated areas a more opaque pale pink and the shaded passages muted green, blue and violet washes before adding delicate violet, orange-red and green



85c Edgar Degas, *Woman having her hair combed*, 1886-88. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, bequest of Mrs H.O. Havemeyer, 1929.

hatchings to the shadows and mid-tones. The lines are beside and on top of each other, mostly horizontal and diagonal, but sometimes vertical, creating a rich pattern of contrasting colours which melt optically into warm greys when seen from a distance. He set up a contrast by using a fluid, cool, light blue for the background, which he only painted when the figure was largely if not entirely dry. Some of this paint was wiped off with the brush, whereupon he added a second equally watery layer of pastel blue that is so thin that the ground shows right through it.

The structure of the remaining painting (cat. 87) is almost identical. Once again Van Gogh worked with an underlayer for the illuminated parts of the torso, added hatchings at the end and painted a blotchy background in two thinned layers. The paint was fluid, so much so that it ran here and there on the right. The use of colour in the torso is a little warmer, though, as is that of the background due to the blue-green pigment cerulean blue.

Although Toulouse-Lautrec was the main source of inspiration for this use of thinned paint and porous supports, Van Gogh may not have been indebted to him so much for his parallel strokes and hatchings as to Edgar Degas. This acquaintance of Theo's had introduced this manner of drawing in his pastels of female nudes in the mid-1880s, six of which were on display at the eighth Impressionist exhibition in 1886.[5] Van Gogh thought that they were about the only important works in the show, but only adopted those loose streaks and hatchings later, in these studies of plaster casts.[6] His touch was far more delicate than Degas's, though, and one can say without any exaggeration that one of the torsos of Venus on canvas (cat. 86) is the most detailed, refined work in his entire oeuvre.

Degas showed in his exhibited pastels, and even more so in the ones he made shortly afterwards (fig. 85c), that the style of drawing need not be subjugated to the modelling of the figures. Intrigued by this idea, Van Gogh evidently wanted to test how far he could take it in these three works, and it is here that one finds a striking

5 Degas later added another one. On this, and the identification of the pastels, see Thomson 1988, pp. 128-35, esp. pp. 130-32, and Berson 1996, vol. 2, pp. 258, 259. By now Van Gogh may also have seen Degas's follow-up to those pastels with female nudes. Theo first exhibited a work by Degas in his gallery at the end of October 1886 (see letter 570), and in January 1888 he was to organise a show of his female nudes, on which see Thomson 1999, pp. 107-10. The fact that Degas's nudes were the source of inspiration for Van Gogh's paintings of plaster casts was first noted by Welsh-Ovcharov in Paris 1988, p. 72, no. 17. See also Kendall 1999, pp. 32, 33.
6 See letters 569 and 649 for Van Gogh's approval of Degas's nudes.

connection with his earlier studies of plaster casts, in which he also explored the relationship between brushstroke and modelling. Back then he was searching for an impasted, painterly brushstroke guided by the curves of the torsos, but now he was looking for the opposite by studying the potential of draughtsman-like detailing that actually more or less ignored the curves of the figure.

Van Gogh's drawing in one of the works on canvas largely follows the volumes of the plaster cast (cat. 87), but it does so far less in the other two studies. There he used it solely for the illuminated parts of the torsos, but for the shaded passages, particularly in the other work on canvas (cat. 86), he elected to use hatchings which form an almost autonomous pattern. As a result, like Degas he set up a certain tension between the plasticity, which is only suggested with perspective, tonal contrasts and colour, and the manner of drawing, which is independent of it. Van Gogh later regarded this exercise in putting the drawing not so much at the service of faithful reproduction but giving it an independent role of its own as a way of attaining a higher goal of style, allying himself with the modern art of the day. 'If I come back to the north I plan to do a whole lot of Greek studies', he wrote in 1889 while in Saint-Rémy. 'You know, *painted* studies with white and blue and only a little orange, just like in the open air. I *must* draw and seek style' [808].

Cat. 85

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 65, vol. 2, pl. LIX; De la Faille 1939, p. 193, no. 244; De la Faille 1970, pp. 116, 620; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 123, notes 37 and 40, p. 230; Hulsker 1977, pp. 230, 232, 233; Hulsker 1980, pp. 228, 233; Amsterdam 1987, p. 326, no. 1.117; Murray 1991, p. 45; Hulsker 1996, pp. 230, 232, 233; Kendall 1999, p. 33; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 73, note 40; Brescia 2005-06, pp. 360, 361, no. 69; Coyle 2007, p. 278.

EXHIBITIONS
1955 Amsterdam, no. 77d; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2005-06 Brescia, no. 69.

Cat. 86

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
Bonger 1890, no. 305 or 306 [Etude d'après l'antique]; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 65 [no ill.]; not in De la Faille 1939; De la Faille 1970, pp. 114, 115, 620; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 123, notes 37 and 40, pp. 173, 230; Hulsker 1977, p. 230; Hulsker 1980, p. 230; Amsterdam 1987, p. 325, no. 1.112; Paris 1988, pp. 72, 73, no. 17; Murray 1991, p. 45; Nochlin 1994, p. 47; Hulsker 1996, p. 230; Kendall 1999, pp. 31-33; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, p. 137, note 55; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 63, 74, note 78; Coyle 2007, pp. 277, 281.

EXHIBITIONS
1948-49 The Hague, no. 47; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 15; 1988 Paris, no. 17; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.

Cat. 87

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
Bonger 1890, no. 305 or 306 [Etude d'après l'antique]; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 65 [no ill.]; De la Faille 1939, p. 190, no. 239 [ill. of F 216b]; London 1968-69, p. 58, no. 60; De la Faille 1970, pp. 116, 117, 620; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 123, notes 37 and 40, p. 230; Hulsker 1977, pp. 228, 230, 231; Hulsker 1980, pp. 228, 231; Amsterdam 1987, p. 325, no. 1.114; Rome 1988, no. 21; Murray 1991, p. 45; Hulsker 1996, pp. 230, 231; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, p. 137, note 55; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 69, 74, note 78; Coyle 2007, p. 277.

EXHIBITIONS
1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1947 Groningen, no. 27; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 48; 1955 Antwerp, no. 16; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 75; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 18; 1968-69 London, no. 60; 1988 Rome, no. 21; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.

88
Dish with citrus fruit

89
Carafe and dish with citrus fruit

88
Paris, February-March 1887
Oil on canvas
21.0-21.4 x 27.1-27.4 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 193 V/1962
F 338 JH 1237

89
Paris, February-March 1887
Oil on canvas
46.3 x 38.3 cm
Signed at bottom right in green:
Vincent 87
Inv. s 20 V/1962
F 340 JH 1239

Like his studies of plaster casts (cats. 85-87), these two works are experiments in the use of thinned paints and delicate, draughtsman-like drawing. The central motif in each is a china dish with citrus fruit on a greenish blue tablecloth. This was the first time that Van Gogh depicted citrus fruit. The three pieces on the right in *Dish with citrus fruit* (cat. 88) are lemons, but the two on the left are not. Judging by their round shape and the hatchings in orange and ochre they can only be oranges, like the two pieces beside the dish in the other still life (cat. 89).[1]

The small size of cat. 88 indicates that it preceded the other one, in which Van Gogh sought a more complex composition by adding a carafe to the scene, which this time he signed and dated. As in his later *Café table with absinthe* (cat. 90), he was taking on the challenge of giving a convincing depiction of the almost intangible effect of glass. He no longer kept the background neutral but enlivened it with a decorative pattern that he had previously used in his still life with chives (cat. 80).[2] Another departure from *Dish with citrus fruit* is that the table is on a slant – a device that he took from Japanese prints, in which there are often very pronounced diagonals. It was a perspectival invention that he employed several times in this period (see cats. 84, 90).

Dish with citrus fruit was painted on a ready-primed *figure* 3 canvas (27 x 22 cm) that is stamped with a '3' on the reverse (fig. 88a) (Table 3.5, no. 46). It has a ground consisting mainly of lead white and chalk which was applied very thinly, providing a relatively absorbent surface in which the texture of the canvas is plainly visible. Van Gogh used absorbent types of support quite often in the first half of 1887 (see cats. 81, 82, 85, 87).

Stereomicroscopy and paint cross-sections reveal that Van Gogh drew the outlines of the lemons on the ground with a black material, possibly conté crayon or graphite, and seemingly that of the dish as well. He then painted the scene wet-into-wet, alternating between the background and the main subject. He first laid in the large areas of colour with highly thinned paint and broad strokes in such a way that the ground showed through clearly. He then worked up the forms with more texture. The background, fruit and dish (to a lesser extent) consist almost entirely of hatchings, some of them quite coarse but the majority thin. For this he used his finest 'drawing brushes', for some of the lines are less than 0.5 mm wide. The lively hatching pattern was only continued in the tablecloth in the shadow of the dish; the remainder was painted with broad, loose brushstrokes.

Many of the strokes are parallel to each other, as they are in the studies of plaster

1 Initially it was thought that both paintings were of lemons (Amsterdam 1905, nos. 32 and 43), and that became the accepted opinion. See also Roland Dorn in Essen/Amsterdam 1990-91, p. 85.
2 On this see the entries on cats. 79, 80, and note 8 there.



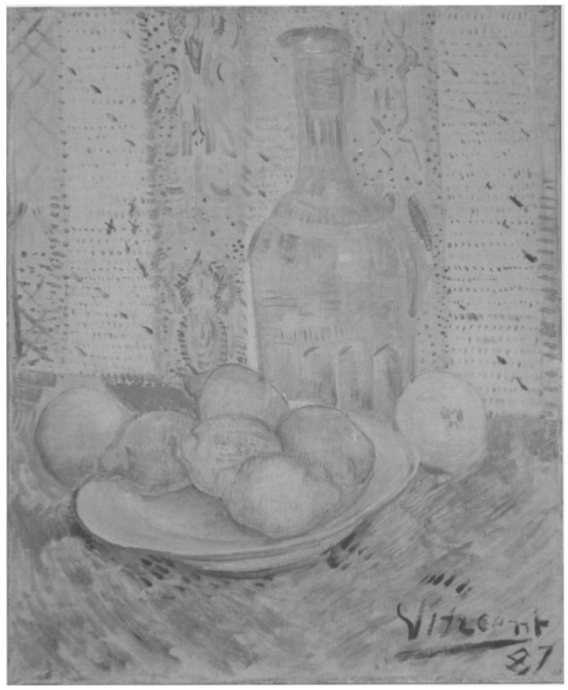
88 Dish with citrus fruit



89 Carafe and dish with citrus fruit



88a Reverse of cat. 88 showing size stamp (now covered up by a loose lining).



88b Infrared reflectogram of cat. 89.

casts (cats. 85-87). He did not follow the curvature in the lemons but used rigid vertical and diagonal lines to create an autonomous pattern that is totally at odds with the effect of volume. This search for a lively decorative pattern also outweighed a proper suggestion of space. The dish cannot possibly be called circular, and the back of the tablecloth undulates. The lines and hatchings in the right background were feathered with a hog-hair brush in order to set up a contrast with the pronounced hatchings on the left (p. 149, fig. 8). This was not the only time that Van Gogh blurred his paints into each other, for which he occasionally used his fingers (cat. 82).

There is an abundance of complementary contrasts in both works. The pale pink washes for the background have dark blue and green hatchings, and Van Gogh worked with contrasting purple, green, red and orange on the yellow underlayer for the lemons. This original, bright colour scheme has lost its intensity due to the severe yellowing of the varnish. The use of thin paints also accelerated the discolouration of light-sensitive pigments, because the pigment particles were insufficiently embedded in the binder. One result is that the red lake used for the contours and hatchings in the lemons is now a pale brown.

Carafe and dish with citrus fruit (cat. 89) was painted on a cheap, *étude*-quality, *figure* 8 canvas (Table 3.5, no. 27). As in cat. 88, the lead white and chalk ground was applied thinly and the composition is underdrawn (fig. 88b), possibly with charcoal. It can be seen with the naked eye, and even more clearly with infrared reflectography, that the outlines of the fruit were delineated and that the position of the red strip of the decorative background on the far right was marked with a long line. Van Gogh then filled in the large areas of the composition with thin paint: green-blue for the table, leaving a reserve for the white dish, yellow-brown for the fruit, and alternating stripes of lilac and pink with red borders for the background decoration. He immediately removed that paint again, partly with a cloth and partly with a dry brush. It was mainly wiped off the nubs of the weave and remained behind in the troughs, emphasising the structure of the canvas. Van Gogh then worked the scene up with hatchings, which he alternated with dots and short strokes, with a wash here and there in the dish and carafe. The hatchings are generally not as fine as in



88c Emile Schuffenecker, *Still life with a bowl and fruits*, 1886. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.



88d Detail of a photograph of the drawing room in Jo van Gogh-Bonger's apartment at Koninginneweg 77, Amsterdam, c. 1915. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

the other still life, but their effect is still decorative. The purpose of the taut horizontal lines in the carafe is not so much to reinforce the modelling of the forms – in fact they negate its rounded shape. The composition bears a striking resemblance to a still life of oranges painted by Emile Schuffenecker in 1886 (fig. 88c), which Van Gogh may have known, since his brother included it in an exhibition in 1888.[3]

Van Gogh's colourful painting utilises the pigments that had recently become his favourites. The tablecloth was painted with cobalt violet and cerulean blue, and a manufacturer's ready-made mixture of cadmium yellow and mainly Kopp's purpurin was used for the yellowish orange oranges. As usual, he adhered steadfastly to the theory of complementary colours. The yellow citrus fruits cast a lilac shadow on the dish, and the blue-green tablecloth stands out against the warm red in the background. In contrast to the small still life, though, Van Gogh did not opt for contrasting colours within one and the same passage but for what are known as sympathetic or related colours. For example, the lemons on their pale yellow base were worked up with brighter yellow and orange, and the tablecloth with blue, green and lilac. One notable feature is the elegant, green signature, which was painted on top of the partly wet paint of the background.

Although *Dish with citrus fruit* is quite small and unsigned, it enjoyed some prestige in the family collection. Theo's widow included it in an exhibition in Rotterdam in 1892, which was one of the first shows devoted to Van Gogh's work in the Netherlands, and later gave it a permanent place on the mantelpiece in the drawing room of her home in Amsterdam (fig. 88d).[4] *Carafe and dish with citrus fruit* (cat. 89) was not sent back to the Netherlands from Paris with the other works in 1891 but was left with the colourman and art dealer Julien Tanguy, who had it until his death in 1894.[5]

3 It is mentioned in Felix Fénéon, 'Aux vitrines dans la rue', *La Revue Indépendante*, May 1888, included in Fénéon 1970, vol. 1, p. 111. See also Amsterdam/Paris 1999-2000, p. 216.

4 It is known to have been in that 1892 exhibition at the Oldenzeel gallery from Johan de Meester, 'Letteren en kunst. Vincent (Van Gogh)', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 6 March 1892, in which he described it as follows. 'Look at that dish on which fruits lie. It does not at all have the shape, the dimensions, the proportions of a real dish. But then place a real dish of fruit under the same fall of light [...] - do you now see the dish, do you not now see the eye just as Van Gogh make it see. [...] No, that dish under those fruits was not drawn after the real shape of a dish' ('Bezie dat bord, waarop vruchten liggen, het heeft helemaal niet den vorm, de afmetingen, de proportie van een werkelijk bord; maar zet nu eens een werkelijk bord met vruchten onder hetzelfde licht naar het schilderij [...] - ziet gij nu het bord, ziet gij nu het oog niet zóó als Van Gogh het deed zien. [...] Nee, dat bord daar onder die vruchten is niet geteekend naar den werkelijken vorm van een bord').

5 See the inventory drawn up by Tanguy's wife of the works by Van Gogh that were in the shop when Tanguy died (b 1449, b 1450, and Stolwijk/Veenenbos 2002, pp. 24, 25, and note 30).

Cat. 88

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Bonger 1890, no. 62 [Citron (3)]; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 95, vol. 2, pl. xcii; De la Faille 1939, p. 233, no. 309; Tralbaut 1955 i, p. 36; De la Faille 1970, pp. 160, 624; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 230; Hulsker 1977, pp. 272-74; Hulsker 1980, pp. 272, 273; Amsterdam 1987, p. 331, no. 1.148; Hulsker 1996, pp. 272, 273; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 117, 124; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 68, 74, notes 78, 79; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 56, 285, 306.

Exhibitions
1892 Rotterdam, no cat. known [for sale]; 1905 Amsterdam i, no. 32 [Dfl. 300]; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 92; 1957-58 Stockholm, no. 110, Luleå, Kiruna, Umeå, Östersund, Sandviken & Gothenburg, no cat. known; 1983 Amsterdam & Braunschweig, no. 78 [only Braunschweig]; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.

Cat. 89

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Bonger 1890, no. 50 [Nature morte (citrons & carafe)]; Druet 1920, no. 20074; De la Faille 1927, ill. p. 21; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 96, vol. 2, pl. xciii; De la Faille 1939, p. 232, no. 307; Tralbaut 1955 i, p. 36; London 1968-69, p. 70, no. 97; De la Faille 1970, pp. 160, 624; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 108, 192, 230; Hulsker 1977, pp. 272, 274; Hulsker 1980, pp. 272, 274; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 196, 197, 331, no. 1.150; Feilchenfeldt 1988, pp. 88, 89; Essen/Amsterdam 1990-91, pp. 85, 86, no. 13; Hulsker 1996, pp. 272-74; Stolwijk/Veenenbos 2002, p. 24, note 30; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 117, 124, 132, 137, note 55; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 66, 74, note 78; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 57, 285, 306.

Exhibitions
1895 Paris, no cat.; 1905 Berlin i, ex catalogue [DM. 1,800]; 1905 Amsterdam i, no. 43 [Dfl. 900]; 1905 Utrecht, no. 13 [Dfl. 900]; 1905 Leiden, no. 13 [Dfl. 900]; 1906 Rotterdam, no. 13; 1906 Middelburg, no cat. [Dfl. 900]; 1908 Paris, no. 28 [Ffr. 3,000]; 1908 Munich, no. 4 (Dfl. 1,200); 1908 Dresden, no. 4 [Dfl. 1,200]; 1908 Frankfurt am Main, no. 7 (for sale); 1908 Zürich, no. 4; 1908 The Hague & Amsterdam, no cat. known, no. 10 [Dfl. 1,800]; 1908 Berlin ii, no cat. known [Dfl. 1,800]; 1909-10 Munich, no. 2, Frankfurt am Main, Dresden & Chemnitz, no cat. known [Dfl. 2,500]; 1911 Amsterdam, no. 8 [Dfl. 3,500]; 1911-12 Hamburg, no cat. known [DM.? 2,500]; 1911-12 Bremen, no cat.; 1920 New York, no. 62 [$7.000]; 1921 New York, no. 120; 1923-24 London, no. 19 [not for sale]; 1924 Basel, no. 17 (not for sale); 1924 Zürich, no. 20 (not for sale); 1924 Stuttgart, no. 8 (not for sale); 1925 Paris, no. 14 [not for sale]; 1925 The Hague, no cat.; 1925 Potsdam, no. 39 (not for sale); 1926 The Hague, no. 122; 1926 Munich, no. 2083 (not for sale); 1927 Paris, no cat.; 1930 Amsterdam, no. 22; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 44; 1932 Manchester, no. 18; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1946 Stockholm, Gothenburg & Malmö, no. 27; 1946 Copenhagen, no. 27; 1947 Groningen, no. 34; 1947-48 London, Birmingham & Glasgow, no. 24; 1948 Bergen & Oslo, no. 16; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 94; 1950 Hilversum, no. 17; 1952 Enschede, no. 31; 1952 Eindhoven, no. 18; 1953 The Hague, no. 80; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 76; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 3; 1954 Zürich, no. 30; 1954-55 Willemstad, no. 8; 1955 Palm Beach, Miami & New Orleans, no. 8; 1955 Antwerp, no. 171; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 83; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 18; 1957 Breda, no. 39; 1957-58 Leiden & Schiedam, no. 12; 1958 Deventer, no. 10; 1958 Mons, no. 11; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 30; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 18; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 18; 1963 Sheffield, no. 4; 1963 Humlebæk, no. 13; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 13; 1965 Charleroi & Ghent, no. 9; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 18; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 23; 1968-69 London, no. 97; 1969-70 Los Angeles, Saint Louis & Philadelphia, no. 21; 1970-71 Baltimore, San Francisco & New York, no. 21; 1971-72 Paris, no. 41; 1972 Bordeaux, no. 10; 1972-73 Strasbourg & Bern, no. 10; 1990-91 Essen & Amsterdam, no. 13 [only Essen]; 1996 Den Bosch, no. 138; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 27.

90
Café table with absinthe

Paris, February-March 1887
Oil on canvas
46.3 x 33.2 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 186 V/1962
F 339 JH 1238

This painting was once described as 'Glass of water with a bottle', but that could only have been dreamed up by a teetotaller.[1] The view is of a small table in a café on which there is a carafe of water and a full glass of absinthe. That cheap, highly alcoholic drink, which had been extremely popular among the French since the 1840s, despite its bitter taste, is green in its pure form. It is usually diluted with water in order to tone down the taste a bit, which gives it a greenish yellow colour, and that has just happened here. The water in the carafe does not reach the neck, the glass is full, and the drink has a pale green cast.[2]

It has been ordered for just one person, and in that respect the scene is closely related to *In the café* (cat. 84), in which Van Gogh first experimented with the subject of the solitary drinker that so appealed to the Realists. Although the customer is now invisible, he or she is still the real subject of the painting, because this is what they are seeing: the drink before them and the street beyond.

Van Gogh was here following the example of his friend Toulouse-Lautrec, who was trying to prove himself at this time with scenes of women drinking in cafés (fig. 90a; see also cats. 77, 84).[3] Van Gogh's innovation of depicting a solitary customer indirectly would have been born of necessity, because he was unable to pay models and thus hit on this way of merely suggesting the subject.[4] He may have known Toulouse-Lautrec's *Billiard room* of 1882 (fig. 90b), in which the focus is again on absinthe and the drinker is likewise absent. However, it does not have the ambience of a café, and it is not clear whether he ever saw this early work by his friend.[5]

The café in Van Gogh's painting is not immediately recognisable but must have been near where he lived, in Montmartre with all its places of entertainment, where a glass of absinthe at the end of the working day was part of the local routine. 'The "absinthe" hour of the Boulevards begins vaguely at half-past five,' as the English writer H.P. Hugh said at the time about this part of Paris, 'and it ends just as vaguely at half-past seven; but on the hill it never ends. Not that it is a home of the drunkard in any way; but the deadly opal drink lasts longer than anything else, and it is the aim of Montmartre to stop as long as possible on the *terrasse* of a café and watch the world go by'.[6]

Van Gogh had got into the habit of drinking a glass of absinthe a day while he was in Paris, and although he portrayed himself in self-portraits as a wine-lover,[7] it was as a devotee of the green-yellow drink that Toulouse-Lautrec immortalised him (fig. 90c). According to Signac, Van Gogh always hurried off to a café at the end of the day, where 'the absinths and brandies would follow each other in quick succession'.[8] Since Van Gogh himself said that he was 'almost an alcoholic' by the time he left Paris in early 1888 [694], this characterisation of his drinking habits would not have been too far from the truth. Viewed in that light, this scene of a table in a café

1 Invoice from J.C. Traas to V.W. van Gogh, b 4207.
2 For the history of absinthe see Conrad 1988 and De Langle 1990, pp. 187-94. Bremmer 1930, vol. 4,p. 31, suggested that the carafe was an old one because of what he thought was its broken lip. It does indeed look ridged, as if bits had broken off, but that effect is unintentional. Van Gogh drew the neck with two circular movements, but when he later applied a stroke to suggest some light he accidentally removed some paint from the contour, wrongly creating the impression of a jagged edge.
3 Murray 1991, p. 245, dated this painting by Toulouse-Lautrec (Dortu 1971, vol. 2, p. 158, no. 328) to early 1887 (see cat. 84, note 2, for his other works with this subject).
4 Van Gogh did the same in his drawing *Window in the Bataille restaurant* (F 1392 JH 1218), in which the presence of a customer in a café is suggested by his coat hanging prominently on a peg.
5 Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 162, was the first to point out the similarity. She even went so far as to suggest that Van Gogh was thinking of that painting when he started work on his *Café table with absinthe*, but since it is an early work by Toulouse-Lautrec that is difficult to prove. For *The billiard room* see Dortu 1971, vol. 2, p. 74, no. 171.
6 'The two Montmartres', *Paris Magazine*, June 1899, quoted in Littlewood 1987, p. 194.
7 Perhaps cat. 77, and the image underneath F 376 JH 1331 (fig. 77a on p. 276).
8 Fels 1928, quoted in Letters 1958, vol. 3, p. 608. See also Arnold 1992, pp. 78-80, 103, 104.



90 Café table with absinthe





90a Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Waiting in Grenelle*, 1886-87. Williamstown (Mass.), Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.

90b Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *The billiard room*, 1882. Albi, Musée Toulouse-Lautrec.

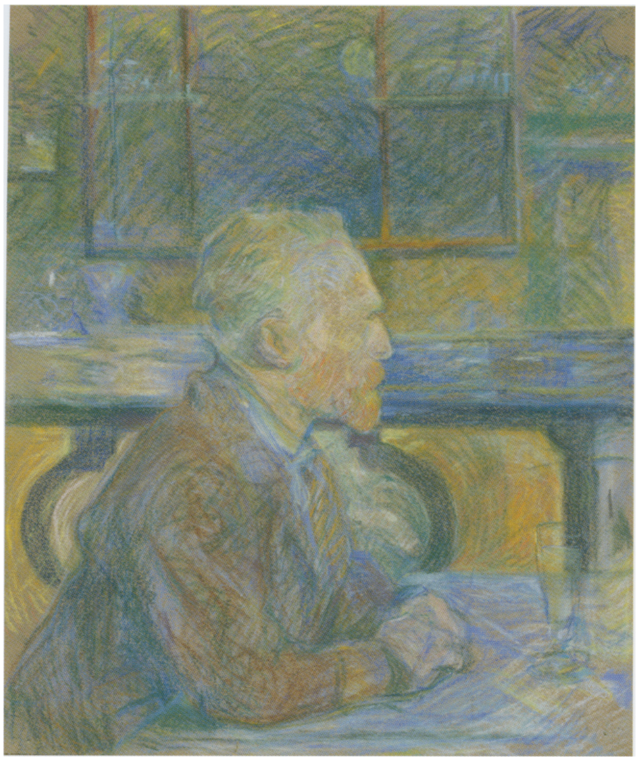
can also be interpreted as a self-portrait, although it is not clear whether Van Gogh intended it as such.

The front of the café consists of windowed sections which may have opened outwards, for there is a latch on the central vertical mullion. The windows look out onto quite a large street with a wide pavement on which there is a tree (a new planting, judging by the palings around it). Part of the pavement on the far side of the street can be seen at top right and centre.[9] There is not only a tree there but also a bench, so it was a street without a central reservation but with wide pavements on both sides on which there were trees and benches.[10]

This painting is one of the first in which Van Gogh employed an attractive invention from Japanese prints, which was to depict a distant view with large, seemingly unimportant objects in the foreground.[11] His own stock of Japanese woodcuts, which he had just started collecting, contained several compositions of that kind (fig. 90d), and they would have provided him with this inspiration and enabled him to set up a rich visual interaction between the café table and the slightly more distant outside world. He also incorporated a pronounced diagonal in the scene, as he did in his portrait of Agostina Segatori as a customer in a café and in his still lifes with citrus fruit (see cats. 84, 88, 89), but he manipulated the perspective to suit his own purposes. We are supposedly looking at the café table from a seated position, but in fact we can see much more of the nearby pavement than one would expect, as if Van Gogh had stood up to get a better view when painting it.

The painting, which was simply called 'L'absinth' in 1890, is on a tightly woven, stock *paysage* 8 canvas that was commercially primed with a cream-coloured ground (Table 3.5, no. 58).[12] It is a typical example of the *peinture à l'essence* technique that Van Gogh started using at the beginning of 1887. Both the table in the foreground and the street in the background are in pale, watery colours, against which the front of the café with the window mullions stands out starkly in the middleground. The painting was completed in a single session. Van Gogh first indicated the positions of the table, carafe and glass with highly thinned green-brown paint in such a way that the light ground showed through. He then laid in the front of the café and the windows, once again in a layer of green-brown, but this time darker and more opaque. The street came last, in transparent green and brown, like the foreground. The scene was then worked up in this wet underlayer with his

9 It can be deduced from the vertical strokes at top right that this is meant to be the façade of a row of houses.
10 This does not match boulevard de Clichy, where Le Tambourin was, but it could be avenue de Clichy, where there was the Grand Bouillon-Restaurant Du Chalet at no. 43 that Van Gogh frequented, which belonged to Etienne-Lucien Martin, whose portrait he painted (cat. 136), so we could be seeing part of the interior of that restaurant. However, there is a different type of chair in Van Gogh's painting of this restaurant from late 1887 (fig. 136a).
11 Varnedoe 1990, pp. 53-77, discusses the introduction of this invention in 19th-century French painting.
12 Bonger 1890, no. 74.



90c Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Van Gogh in Le Tambourin*, 1886-87. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



90d Utagawa Kunisada, *An actor as Katanaya Hanshichi*, 1855. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



90e Fingerprint on cat. 90.

favourite colours of violet, green-yellow, green-blue and orange. They were applied mainly as pale pastel hues in the foreground and background, but look more saturated on the dark green-brown of the middleground.

Touches of wine red and purplish pink originally played an important part in the scene. Here Van Gogh used a light-sensitive organic red, very probably cochineal, on a tin substrate, which became one of his favourite colours in the spring of 1887. That bright scarlet pigment is relatively well-preserved in *Café table with absinthe* where it was used pure, as in the lines of the café frontage and beside the windows, but it has discoloured to a pale, drab pink where he mixed it with white, in the street scene for example. It is difficult to gauge the original intensity of these passages. In 1997, when the paper strips that had been pasted around the edges of the painting in 1930 were removed, it turned out that the pink at the top of the right side was slightly brighter, but that was not necessarily the original colour. The light-sensitive paint had very probably already suffered light damage before the edges were covered up.

Van Gogh used small, loose strokes, as well as the dashes and hatchings found mainly in the facade of the café and the mullions of the windows. Pure colours were applied on top of each other and intermingled. Most of the hatchings are horizontal and vertical, but are occasionally curved, in the table for instance, where they suggest the reflections of the carafe and glass, and around the foot of the tree in the background. There is an odd hatching in the back of the chair. Here Van Gogh first painted long, vertical lines of colour and then drew horizontal lines through the wet paint with a fine brush (p. 138, fig. 68). There is also a remarkable number of fingerprints around the edges of the painting, where Van Gogh picked it up while it was still wet. There is even one, probably a thumbprint, in the middle of the picture, on the left-hand contour of the carafe (fig. 90e), which just goes to show how carelessly he could treat his works.[13]

13 On this see Hendriks/Van Tilborgh 2001 and Hendriks 2010.

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Bonger 1890, no. 74 [L'absinthe (8)]; Druet 1920, no. 20099; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, pp. 95, 96, vol. 2, pl. XCII; Bremmer 1930, vol. 4, pp. 30, 31, no. 31; De la Faille 1939, p. 232, no. 306; London 1968-69, p. 63, no. 76; De la Faille 1970, pp. 160, 161, 624; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 108, 162, 192, 193, 230, 239; Hulsker 1977, pp. 272-74; Hulsker 1980, pp. 272, 273; Toronto/Amsterdam 1981, pp. 98, 99, no. 2; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 198, 199, 331, no. 1.149; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 88; Kyoto/Tokyo 1992, pp. 66, 67, no. 5; Heijbroek/Wouthuysen 1993, p. 193; Hulsker 1996, pp. 272, 273; Hendriks/Van Tilborgh 2001 I; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 69, 74, notes 78-80; Coyle 2007, p. 322; Seoul 2007-08, p. 245; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 57, 286, 307.

Exhibitions
1905 Amsterdam I, no. 92 [Dfl. 500]; 1905 Hamburg, no. 49 [Dfl. 600]; 1905 Dresden, no. 45; 1905 Berlin II, no cat.; 1906 Vienna, no. 35 (for sale); 1908 Paris, no. 11 [Ffr. 3,000]; 1908 Munich, no. 27 (Dfl. 1,200); 1908 Dresden, no. 27 [Dfl. 1,200]; 1908 Frankfurt am Main, no. 29 (for sale); 1908 Zürich, no. 21; 1908 The Hague & Amsterdam, no cat. known, no. 12; 1908 Berlin II, no cat. known [Dfl. 1,800]; 1911 Amsterdam, no. 20 [Dfl. 2,000]; 1926 Dresden, no. 214; 1928 Berlin, no. 26; 1928 Frankfurt am Main, no. 15; 1928 Vienna, no. 14; 1928-29 Hanover, Munich & Leipzig, no cat., no. 11, no cat. known; 1929 Utrecht, no. 19 [not for sale]; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 40; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 93; 1949 Middelburg, no. 55; 1954 Rotterdam, no. 118; 1955 Antwerp, no. 170; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 82; 1957 Marseille, no. 24; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 16; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 22; 1968-69 London, no. 76; 1971-72 Paris, no. 40; 1976-77 Tokyo, Kyoto & Nagoya, no. 42; 1981 Toronto & Amsterdam, no. 2; 1992 Kyoto & Tokyo, no. 5; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 28; 2003 Amsterdam II, unnumbered; 2005 Washington & Chicago, no. 89; 2007-08 Seoul, unnumbered.

91
Sunset in Montmartre

Paris, late February-early March 1887
Oil on canvas
21.5 x 46.4 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 133 M/1970
F 266a JH 1223

Underlying image:
indeterminate
After March 1886

This small atmospheric landscape has wrongly been labelled a moonlit scene since 1905.[1] There is no reflection in the sky when the moon rises or sets, and since the sky here is orange and the disc is also due west, this poetic moment is nothing other than the setting of the sun.[2] It is seen from the observation point by the Blute-fin windmill, as can be seen from comparison with a photograph taken from that spot in 1887 (fig. 91a). We are looking northwest, with the smoking chimneys of the factories at Clichy on the right and the peak of the Sannois hills in the centre, north of Argenteuil.[3] In the foreground is one of the fences running down the hill of Montmartre, which can also be seen in Van Gogh's *Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette* from the late summer of 1887 (cat. 115).

The painting was lined in 1970, but since that was done with a semitransparent canvas one can still see the back of the original support, which has the identifying mark of a size 10, together with the name of the supplier: 'Maison VALLÉ / HOFER FRÈRES / PARIS' (Table 3.5, no. 39).[4] Although both 'Maison VALLÉ' and the number '10' were painted over before the lining (fig. 91b) they still show through, and are even more clearly visible in the infrared (fig. 91c). Interestingly, the picture is actually far smaller than a *figure* 10, because instead of 55 x 46 cm it measures approximately 21.5 x 46.4. Van Gogh evidently took a standard canvas, which was ready-primed with a thin, pale pink ground consisting of lead white, chalk and a bit of orange pigment, and cut it roughly in half to leave himself with a squatter version of a *marine 8* (a *basse marine* 8 measures 27 x 46 cm). That is why the supplier's stamp is not in its customary position in the middle of the canvas but at the bottom.

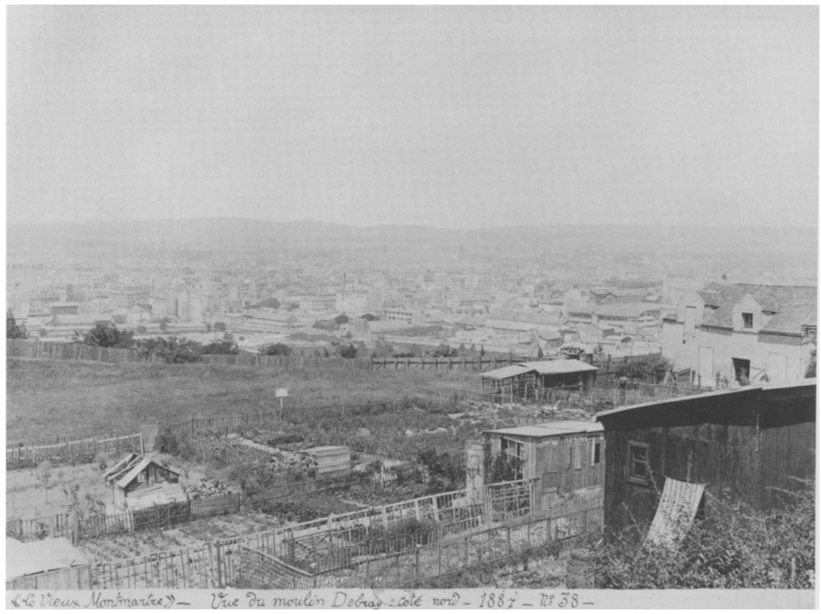
The original canvas had been painted with a scene which shows up in the infrared reflectogram and under the stereomicroscope as a black, tapering shape that extends down to the present bottom tacking edge.[5] Various red and orange blotches which show through the present foreground and middleground also belong to that scene. After cutting the canvas down Van Gogh immediately painted over that dry work without scraping it off or applying an intermediate layer (see Table 5), as he often did in 1886 (cats. 51, 69, 73, 74, 76). He painted the landscape rapidly in a single session, working first on the sky and the middleground before adding the black fence and ending with the foreground. The fence had a fragmentary blue underpaint, but apart from that the paints were applied in one go. There are two of the artist's fingerprints in the wet paint along the lower right edge, with a green paint-stained one on the adjacent tacking margin.

It is not immediately clear when Van Gogh painted this landscape.[6] It can be seen from the long, bare willow branches on the left that it is not autumn but winter, and not yet late March or early April, when trees begin to bud. Nor does the green grass in the foreground look fresh enough for that. The smoke from the chimneys shows that it was an evening with very little wind, and it was evidently

1 Amsterdam 1905, no. 70: 'Maanlandschap'. That has been followed by everyone ever since, with the exception of Hulsker, who first gave it a neutral title in 1977.
2 Kind communication from R.H. van Gent, Physics and Astronomy Department, Utrecht University.
3 See Tucker 1982, pp. 14, 21, 22, for a detailed description of this peak, which is of great cultural and historical interest.
4 For this see the inventory card (B 5621), the conservation order (no. 002744), 26 February 1970, and the conservation report by J. van Beek, 25 June 1970.
5 Analyses showed that it is composed of bone black and red ochre. It is not known whether Van Gogh also used the other half of the canvas for a painting, but so far no candidates have come to light.
6 De la Faille 1970, p. 134, dated it to February-March 1887, as did Welsh-Ovcharov 1976. Hulsker 1996, p. 270, placed it in the winter of 1886-87, while the compilers of Catalogue 1995, p. 185, expanded that to include the autumn of 1886. In Amsterdam 1987, p. 329, it was dated even more broadly to the first half of 1887.



91 Sunset in Montmartre



91a Henri Daudet, *View from the Debray windmill. The north side*, 1887. From *Le vieux Montmartre, 1886-90*. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet des Estampes.

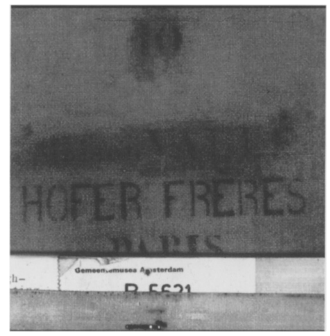


91b Reverse of cat. 91. Photograph taken before the canvas was lined in 1970.

mild enough for Van Gogh to be able to work out of doors, which tells us that the painting was not made in the early winter. He had finished painting *en plein air* in the autumn of 1886, and probably remained indoors until the temperature was warm enough to go out on painting expeditions again.[7] That moment came in February 1887. The temperature remained below 10°C for most of the month but began to rise at the end, as we know from a letter written by Theo on 28 February 1886: 'It's starting to feel a little like spring here, and the sun is already stronger'.[8] In the middle of March there was a brief, very cold snap, but the temperature continued to rise after that, which is the period to which Van Gogh's landscapes with bare branches are assigned, including the present one: late February to mid-April.[9] He concentrated a little more on the immediate surroundings of the mills of Montmartre in that period than he had done in 1886 (cats. 92, 93, 114, 115), as is the case with this painting.

This landscape is not entirely in the style that Van Gogh had adopted at the beginning of 1887. It is quite thinly painted, but the range of colours is limited and his distinctive style of drawing from the previous months is kept to a minimum. The reason for these discrepancies is undoubtedly that Van Gogh wanted to record the fleeting moment of a sunset, so he did not have the time to add all the details with colour and brushwork. What is unusual is that he painted the scene directly on top of an earlier one. Since the beginning of the year he had been preparing his

7 His last landscapes of 1886 were park scenes with trees in autumnal colours, including F 225 JH 1110 and F 224 JH 1112.
8 Letter to his mother, b 906: 'Hier begint het al wat lenteachtig te worden en heeft de zon al kracht'.
9 Relevés Météorologiques, Parc de Saint-Maur, February and March 1886, Paris, Météo-France.



91c Infrared detail of the reverse of cat. 91.

failed canvases for reuse by applying a light covering layer (cats. 92, 93, 95, for example; see also Table 5), but that was not necessary in this case because the first scene had not been worked up.

The first owner of this painting was Theo's brother-in-law Andries Bonger, who probably acquired or was given it before leaving Paris in 1892. He owned several Van Goghs, but it was the only one left when his widow, Baroness Françoise Wilhelmina Maria van der Borch van Verwolde offered it to the Van Gogh Museum in 1970.[10] It may have been for that reason that she wanted it to remain in the Netherlands. 'I know enough Americans who would want it, but it would be nice if a sample of the French period came to hang in the Amsterdam museum. I also believe that this would be what my husband would wish.'[11] The museum agreed with those arguments and acquired the canvas. Not long after its arrival in the city's Stedelijk Museum, where the collection was on temporary loan at the time, it was decided to line *Sunset in Montmartre*, covering its reverse.

10 The other works were F 295 JH 1211, F 348a JH 1221, F 551 JH 1396, F 564 JH 1475 and F 759 JH 1988.
11 Quoted in a letter from E.R. Meijer to the Minister of Culture, 15 January 1970: 'Amerikaanse afnemers weet ik genoeg, maar ik zou het een prettige gedachte vinden als het als specimen van de Franse tijd in het Amsterdamsche Museum kwam te hangen. Ik meen ook, dat zulks in de geest van mijn man zou zijn'.

Provenance

1887- before 1892 T. van Gogh; before 1892-36 A. Bonger, Paris/Amsterdam; 1936-70 F.W.M. Bonger-Baronesse van der Borch van Verwolde; 1970 bought by the Van Gogh Museum; 1970-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Literature

De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 78, vol. 2, pl. LXIV [as 266bis]; Henkel 1930, p. 599; Niehaus 1937, p. 139; De la Faille 1939, p. 200, no. 255 [F 266bis]; Tralbaut 1963 I, p. 49; De la Faille 1970, pp. 134, 135, 621, 622; Locher 1973, p. 107; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 85, 123, note 35, 157, 232; Hulsker 1977, pp. 270-72; Hulsker 1980, pp. 270, 271; Amsterdam 1987, p. 329, no. 1.139; Catalogue 1995, p. 185; Hulsker 1996, pp. 270, 271; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 45, 48, 49, 67, 74, note 78; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 77, 306; Leeman 2009, p.120, no. 90.

Exhibitions

1905 Amsterdam I, no. 70; 1937 Amsterdam, no cat.; 1952 Milan, no. 76; 1971-72 Paris, no. 25; 1972 Amsterdam II, no. 111; 1990 Yokohama, Urasoe, Fukuoka & Kobe, no. 50; 1998-99 Enschede, no cat.; 2004 Nagoya, Morioka & Hiroshima, no. 14; 2008-09 New York & Amsterdam, no. 62.

92
Impasse des Deux Frères

Paris, late February-mid-April 1887
Oil on canvas
35.0 x 65.3 cm
Signed at lower left in red: Vincent
Inv. s 14 V/1962
F 347 JH 1241

Underlying image: flower still life [?]
Summer 1886 [?]

This is a view of a lane running off rue Girardon known as impasse des Deux Frères,[1] which cut the site of the Moulin de la Galette on the hill of Montmartre in two (fig. 92a). The Radet and Blute-fin windmills were to the left of it and the Poivre to the right. Although there were places of entertainment on both sides of the lane, it was still a fairly rural spot. It was unpaved and had stone gutters, which are indicated with thick blue stripes in this painting.

Van Gogh took up a position more or less in the middle of the lane, looking northwest. On the left is a small part of the south side of the *impasse*, which consists of the front of the largest apartment block there (cf. figs. 92b, 92c). At the end of the lane is the entrance to the Blute-fin mill and the nearby belvedere. Almost immediately to the right of that, just beyond the unharnessed cart, is the gateway to the Poivre, which is decorated with four flags. The Poivre's sails face west. The next two large posts in the fence mark the gateway to the garden belonging to the Debray family, the owners of the site (fig. 92d), where people came to eat and dance.[2] To the right of that entrance there is a wheeled model of a windmill which probably served as a kind of advertising pillar.

Although the scene looks true to life, some of it is manipulated. Close to the Poivre was a yellowish building (visible in *Montmartre: windmills and allotments*; cat. 93), but he evidently wanted to have a clear view of the mill and therefore left it out. There is a similar correction in his two paintings of the beginning of the lane of 1886 (fig. 92e), in which he almost eliminated the dance hall in the background in order to have the mill stand out better.[3]

The painting was made before mid-April 1887.[4] The trees are not even in bud, let alone leaf. The weather is warm enough for people to go out for a stroll and enjoy a drink, as can be seen from the tables outside the establishment on the left, all of which indicates that Van Gogh painted the scene somewhere between the beginning of March and the middle of April. The temperature was mostly below 10°C in February that year, but it went up gradually after that.[5]

Van Gogh made six views of impasse des Deux Frères, three in 1886 and three in 1887, one of which was a watercolour (figs. 92g-h).[6] Not one of them shows the lane as the bustling entertainment centre of the Moulin de la Galette, as Federico Zandomeneghi had done with rue Girardon (fig. 92i). Van Gogh preferred to depict it when it was not so busy, and in that respect his paintings are more in the tradition of the street scenes of Stanislas Lépine, who had depicted the rural, unspoiled side of Montmartre in the 1870s (fig. 92j).

Van Gogh's painting seems to be programmatic. There were four entrances to the site of the Moulin de la Galette in impasse des Deux Frères – two on the south, built-up side of the lane (on the left in this painting) and two on the north side. The first two, at the beginning and end of the *impasse*, led to the Radet mill, the dance

1 For this street, which was also called the chemin des Deux Frères', see Hillairet 1963, vol. 1, p. 588.
2 The wire strung between the posts was probably for illuminations in the summer months. Renoir depicted the garden, to which there was also an entrance in rue Girardon, in his *Moulin de la Galette* of 1876 (Paris, Musée d'Orsay). That painting is always located on the west side of the *impasse* (see London etc. 1985-86, p. 146) where the dance hall was, but given the size of the garden that seems to be wrong, as Dorn 2001, p. 158, first pointed out. In the open garden on the east side of the *impasse* there were arbours, swings, shooting galleries, merry-go-rounds and donkey rides, according to Kruissink 1960, pp. 46, 48, 63, some of which can be seen in paintings by the Spanish artists Roman Casas and Santiago Rusiñol, who lived in rue Girardon around 1891 and looked out over the garden from their apartment (see Coll 1999, cats. 140, 141 on p. 300, and Laplana/Palau-Ribes O'Callaghan 2004, vol. 3, pp. 56, cat. 6.3.3, 59, cat. 6.3.10).
3 F 227 JH 1170 and F 228 JH 1171. The authenticity of F 226 JH 1172, which is of the same subject, has been doubted (see Appendix 2).
4 Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 232, dated it to February-March 1887, but Hulsker 1996 believed that it must have been painted in the summer of 1887, like F – JH 1240.
5 There was another cold snap in mid-March (Relevés Météorologiques, Parc de Saint-Maur, February and March 1887, Paris, Météo France).
6 The three of 1886 are the image underneath *Self-portrait as a painter* (fig. 92f, see further cat. 74), F 227 JH 1170 (fig. 92e), and its repetition, F 228 JH 1171. The three of 1887 are cat. 92, F – JH 1240 (fig. 92g) and the watercolour F 1406 JH 1277 (fig. 92h).



92 Impasse des Deux Frères



92a Plan of the Moulin de la Galette, detail from the land registry map, c. 1868. Paris, Archives Municipales de Paris.

1 Restaurant Debray
2 Jardin Debray jeux
3 Debrays' old farmhouse
4 Poivre mill
5 Radet mill
6 Belvedere
7 Blute-fin mill
8 Dance hall
9 Impasse des Deux Frères
10 Rue Girardon
11 Rue Lepic
12 Rue Tholozé



92b Eugène Delâtre, *Impasse des Deux Frères*, c. 1870. Saint-Denis, Musée d'art et d'histoire. As usual for an etch, the street scene is shown in mirror-image.



92c Jules Adolphe Chauvet, *Impasse des Deux Frères. Entrance to the Moulin de la Galette*, 1884. Paris, Musée Carnavalet.



92d Santiago Rusiñol, *The park by the Moulin de la Galette*, 1891. Cau Ferrat, Museu Cau Ferrat.



92e *Moulin de la Galette* (F 227 JH 1170), 1886. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.

hall, the cafés, the Blute-fin and the belvedere, and the last two to the park and the Poivre, as mentioned above.[7] Van Gogh depicted all four entrances, each time combined with the associated mill in the background.[8]

He began in the autumn of 1886 by painting the south side of the street, with the gateway to the Radet at the beginning (fig. 92e) and the one to the Blute-fin and the observation point at the end (fig. 92f).[9] However, he was not happy with that scene, and later painted a self-portrait on top of it (cat. 74). He depicted the two gateways on the other side of the street in the spring of 1887 in the painting discussed here (cat. 92), which shows the entrance to the park, and a similar work with the entrance to the Poivre mill (fig. 92g). In the summer he returned to the failed subject of the entrance to the Blute-fin from the previous year, this time in a watercolour (fig. 92h).[10] There seems to have been some kind of a plan behind this, but we can only speculate as to what it was. Perhaps he was hoping to persuade the owners of the site to exhibit his series of the lane in their cafés or dance hall, which would boost his chances of a sale.[11]

Impasse des Deux Frères (cat. 92) is on an oblong canvas some 5 cm less in height than the standard *basse marine* 15 (40.5 x 65 cm) that was primed commercially with a double ground – first a layer of chalk in a proteinaceous medium, probably animal glue, followed by a thicker layer based on lead white in oil (Table 3.3, no. 11).

There is another scene beneath this painting. A photograph taken in raking light reveals hidden brushstrokes and shapes that have nothing to do with the street scene, and there are touches of colour at the edges extending onto the tacking margins. A craquelure in the trees to the right of the small wheeled windmill reveals green and red colours on a light grey substrate, and there is a reddish brown colour visible below the building on the left and in the right foreground, where it is covered by some broad, slanting strokes of orange that show up clearly in the X-radiograph. Although it is not possible to identify the underlying image, it is

7 See Drawings 3, pp. 216-20, for a description of the south side of the site and the *guinguettes* and cafés.
8 Unlike the preceding works, only the watercolour F 1406 JH 1277 (fig. 92h) omits the mills; see note 10 below.
9 See note 6 above for his repetition of his depiction of the beginning of the lane.
10 Shortage of money probably prompted Van Gogh to use watercolour rather than oils for F 1406 JH 1277; on which see p. 49. He did not include a windmill in the scene, which is indirect evidence that he felt that his first, failed composition – the image beneath cat. 74 (fig. 92f) – was a little too crowded.
11 He had had similar plans in Antwerp; see p. 67.



92f X-radiograph of cat. 74.



92g *Impasse des Deux Frères and the Poivre windmill* (F – JH 1240), 1887. Private collection.

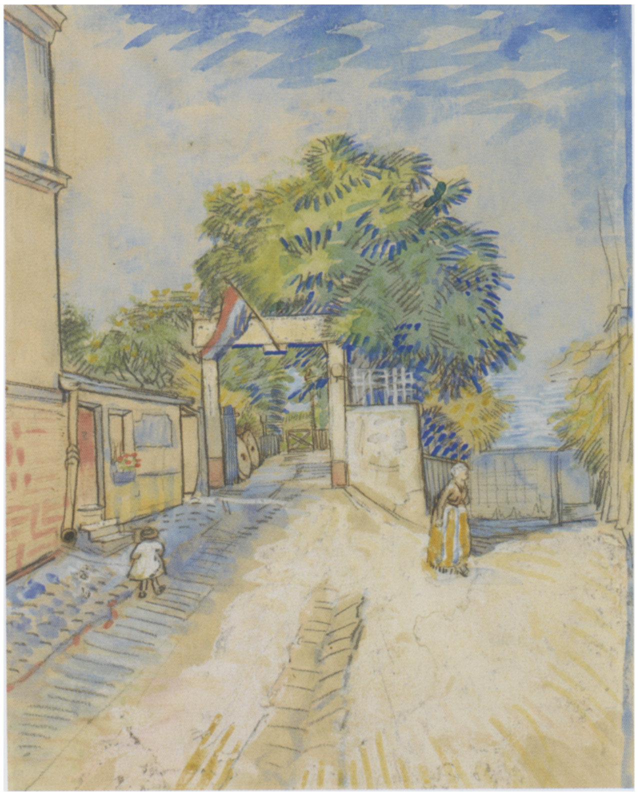
probably a flower still life, for there are several such works with comparable dimensions from the summer of 1886.[12]

Van Gogh made few if any preparations before reusing canvases in 1886. He may have scraped some of the paint off or given it a slapdash covering of paint, but here he set to work more carefully. He first scraped down some thick parts, such as the orange strokes in the right foreground, and then covered the first scene with a thick, whitish layer that gave him a fairly even surface for his second scene. The composition of that second covering layer – lead white and the cool zinc white, which was given an even cooler look by the addition of a bit of French ultramarine – is identical to that in *Montmartre: windmills and allotments* (cat. 93) and *View from Theo's apartment* (cat. 95) (p. 106, fig. 16). Not only are those two works on reused canvases, but both second scenes are in the *à l'essence* technique, so it was clearly the intention to allow the white covering layer to contribute to the effect of the finished painting.

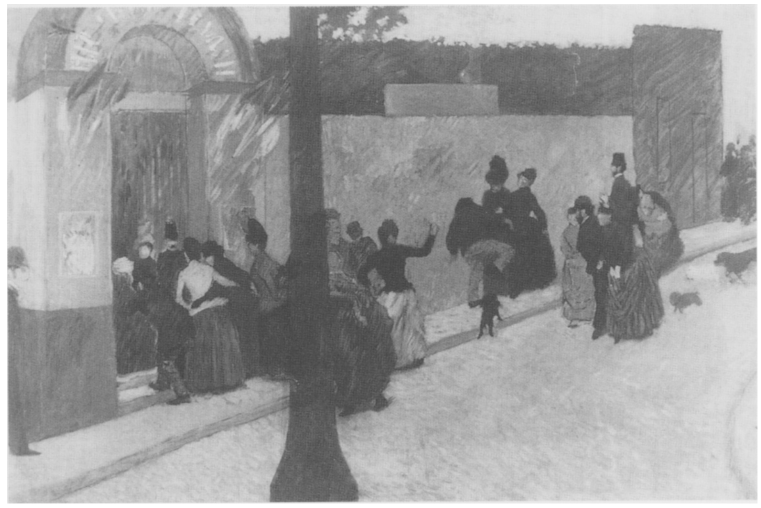
Van Gogh wanted to prevent the colour and relief of the underlying image from interfering with the effect he was looking for, which is why the covering layer is thick and even. Its cool white colour plays an important part in the appearance of the painting. It not only gives the transparent paints luminosity, but it was also left uncovered in many places – between the railings, for instance, and between the spokes of the wheels of the mobile windmill. The zinc white in that intermediate layer has given rise to surface disturbances in all three paintings. It creates a brittle layer when mixed with oil, resulting in sharp stress cracks, and because the layer containing zinc white only dried very slowly it also led to shrinkage cracks in the surface paint.[13]

An infrared reflectogram (fig. 92k) reveals that Van Gogh drew a perspective frame of the standard *figure* 6 size (41 x 33 cm) in the middle of the intermediate layer, probably with graphite, in order to establish the field of view for his street scene. The horizontal central wire of the frame was at the height of the top of the fence, and the wires intersected at the point where the large flagpole beside the mobile windmill crosses the fence. Van Gogh then sketched the entire scene freehand and in detail with the aid of that perspective frame, again probably using graphite. Those drawn lines are also clearly visible to the naked eye.

12 See F 237 JH 1131, which is exactly the same size. F 286 JH 1127 and 286a JH 1128 are similar vertical still lifes. Van Gogh mentioned several unknown flower pieces in letter 568 from the summer of 1886.
13 Study of paint samples revealed that the zinc white pigment in the intermediate layer has converted to zinc soaps, which may be associated with the observed defects. See Keune 2005, pp. 144-50.



92h *Entrance to the Moulin de la Galette* (F 1406 JH 1277), 1887. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



92i Federico Zandomeneghi, *The Moulin de la Galette*, 1878. Private collection.

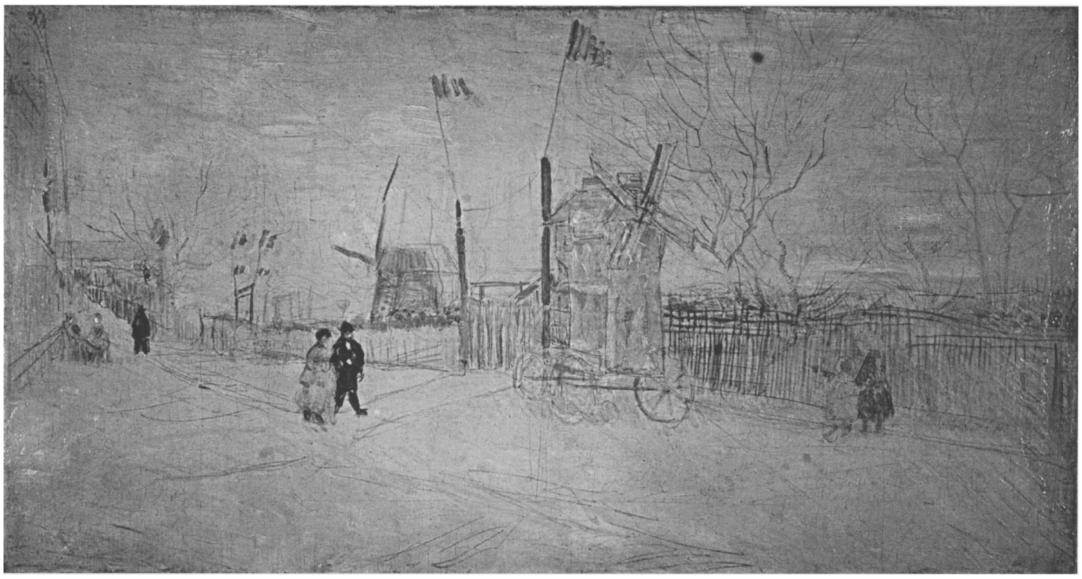
The perspective frame only covered two-thirds of the scene. The part on the left with the building frontage and the path beyond the gateway was prepared with a separate construction drawing in which the vanishing point is on the far left. As a result of this split perspective it is as if one is looking at the scene through a wide-angle lens. Although the forms were indicated in the sketch they were only approximate, and Van Gogh frequently departed from them in the picture surface. The building on the left, for example, is much narrower than planned, and the cart was moved to the right, whereas the left wheel of the mobile windmill was shifted to the left.

Van Gogh first defined the broad passages with pastel tints: pink and light blue for the foreground and green in the sky, but left the ground uncovered for the building on the left, the Poivre and the wheeled mill. The scene was worked up in the wet paint with stronger colours, small brushstrokes and a very draughtsman-like approach for which Van Gogh used his fine, pointed brushes. The cool white ground was left uncovered in the foreground to make that part of the picture luminous, but the sky was given a fairly opaque layer of paint, over which Van Gogh drew the branches of the trees while it was still not entirely dry. The figures were also added right at the end, and it is worth noting that they are similar to those in his other *Impasse des Deux Fréres* (fig. 92g). The couple in the middle of the street and the two children on the right have been repeated, as it were, from which it could be cautiously concluded that he used drawings of these figures which are now lost.

It is not easy to get an idea of the original colour relationships, because the organic red has faded and become browner. Van Gogh used Kopp's purpurin on an aluminium substrate in the pinkish sandy path in the foreground. It is a pigment with a very powerful intensity of colour and is relatively colour-fast when used pure and thick. Van Gogh, though, used the red in thin washes and mixed it with white, which caused it to fade. The organic red in the linear accents in the wheeled windmill, the fence and the figures has become browner and its structure has broken up.



92j Stanislas Lépine, *Montmartre: rue Saint-Vincent*, 1870's. Paris, Musée d'Orsay.



92k Infrared reflectogram of cat. 92.

This ageing behaviour, and the fact that tin was found as a substrate, points to the presence of Van Gogh's favourite cochineal.

The street scene has a slightly different palette from the still lifes that immediately preceded it (cats. 88, 89). There Van Gogh concentrated on the secondary colours of violet, orange and green-blue, but the emphasis here is on the contrast between the primaries blue and red. He combined the complementaries red and green in the mobile windmill, and did the same in the white bands of the French flags but in a paler form, so he clearly attached more importance to colour theory than to reality when it came to creating an attractive painting.

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Druet 1920, no. 20109; De la Faille 1928, vol. I, pp. 97, 98, vol. 2, pl. XCVI; De la Faille 1939, p. 206, no. 264; London 1968-69, p. 63, no. 73; De la Faille 1970, pp. 162, 165, 625; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 92, 157, 232; Hulsker 1977, pp. 274, 277, 284; Hulsker 1980, pp. 274, 277, 282; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 186, 187, 330, no. 1.141; Thomson 1987, p. 16; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 89; Paris 1988, pp. 84, 85, no. 23; Essen/Amsterdam 1990-91, pp. 80, 81, no. 9; Hulsker 1996, pp. 274, 277, 282; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 118, 124, 128; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 48-51, 60, 64, 73, notes 44, 48, p. 74, note 74; Seoul 2007-08, p. 245; Münster 2008-09, pp. 419, 420, no. 364; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 90, 285, 307.

Exhibitions
1905 Amsterdam I, no. 75 [Dfl. 550]; 1905 Utrecht, no. 25 [Dfl. 950]; 1905 Leiden, no. 25 [Dfl. 950]; 1906 Rotterdam, no. 25; 1906 Middelburg, no cat. [Dfl. 950]; 1908 Paris, no. 17 [Ffr. 2,500]; 1908 Munich, no. 19 (Dfl. 1,000); 1908 Dresden, no. 19 [Dfl. 1,000]; 1908 Frankfurt am Main, no. 21 (for sale); 1908 Zürich, no. 12; 1908 The Hague & Amsterdam, no cat. known, no. 15; 1908 Berlin II, no cat. known [Dfl. 1,200]; 1909 Berlin, no cat. [Dfl. 1,200]; 1910 Berlin, no. 25 [DM. 2,500]; 1911 Frankfurt am Main, no cat. known; 1930 Amsterdam, no. 26; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 39; 1932 Manchester, no. 15; 1937 Oslo, no. 7; 1938 Copenhagen, no. 14; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1946 Maastricht & Heerlen, no. 42; 1946 Stockholm, Gothenburg & Malmö, no. 24; 1946 Copenhagen, no. 24; 1946-47 Liège, Brussels & Mons, no. 52; 1947 Paris, no. 61; 1947 Geneva, no. 62; 1949 Middelburg, no. 15; 1949-50 New York & Chicago, no. 48; 1952 Enschede, no. 19; 1952 Eindhoven, no. 22; 1954 Zürich, no. 23; 1954-55 Bern, no. 19; 1955 Antwerp, no. 181; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 92; 1956 Leeuwarden, no. 14; 1957 Breda, no. 43; 1957 Marseille, no. 29; 1957-58 Leiden & Schiedam, no. 16; 1958 Mons, no. 14; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 22; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 19; 1960-61 Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg & Toronto, no. 27; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 21; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 21; 1963 Humlebæk, no. 15; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 15; 1965 Charleroi & Ghent, no. 10; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 16; 1968-69 London, no. 73; 1969-70 Los Angeles, Saint Louis & Philadelphia, no. 14; 1970-71 Baltimore, San Francisco & New York, no. 14; 1971-72 Paris, no. 45; 1972 Bordeaux, no. 11; 1972-73 Strasbourg & Bern, no. 9; 1988 Paris, no. 23; 1990-91 Essen & Amsterdam, nos. 9 and 8 respectively; 1994 Essen, no. 178; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2005 Washington & Chicago, no. 71; 2007-08 Seoul, unnumbered; 2008-09 Münster, no. 364; 2008-10 Cologne, Florence & Vienna, unnumbered [only Vienna].

93
Montmartre: windmills and allotments

Paris, March-mid-April 1887
Oil on canvas
45.2 x 81.3 cm
Signed at lower left in red:
Vincent
Inv. s 15 V/1962
F 346 JH 1244

Underlying image: flower still life [?]
Summer 1886 [?]

The hill of Montmartre is seen from the northwest in this airy, horizontal landscape. Van Gogh was standing on one of the country paths leading to impasse des Deux Frères (see cat. 92) and was looking up at the hill, so in reality the foreground sloped upwards and was certainly not flat, as the painting suggests (fig. 93a).[1] The trees are completely bare, but since people are planting and digging in the allotments it is clearly the beginning of spring,[2] so the painting would have been made before the trees started budding, which usually took place around the middle of April.

The topography of the spot is easy to identify. On the far left is the Debrays' old farmhouse, or rather the southwest corner of it (see cats. 64, 65, 115 and fig. 92a). The yellow building in the distance is difficult to identify, but seen from the allotments it was nearer than the Poivre, which is the mill just to the left of the path in the centre.[3] On the right, at the top of the hill, is the Blute-fin with the orange belvedere beside it, which stood at an angle off to one side of the mill when seen from this vantage point. The horizontal lines to the left of the platform are evidently meant to suggest the lampposts that stood there.[4]

Van Gogh had already taken up the challenge of depicting the Blute-fin from the rural side of the hill in 1886 (fig. 93b),[5] and had discovered that it was best to paint it from the northwest so that the belvedere could also be seen, thus avoiding a boring, completely symmetrical composition.[6] The only remaining problem was the foreground, which was cluttered and dotted with sheds which looked almost as big as the mills. They provided unwanted competition with the main subject, and Van Gogh tried to correct that in his subsequent depictions, all of which date from early 1887, consisting of the present painting (cat. 93), a drawing and a small oil sketch of the Blute-fin (figs. 93c, 93d).

The drawing would have been the earliest of them (fig. 93c), and here Van Gogh tried to solve the problem of the competing foreground by adopting a horizontal format, which left more space around the objects and made the visual rivalry between the sheds and the mill a little less obvious. It was not a real solution, though, so he tried another device for the oil sketch. He went much further down the hill to reduce the size of the garden sheds (fig. 93d), but cleverly did not make the windmill any smaller but left it roughly the size it was in the drawing.[7] This compositional manipulation allows it to tower over everything, and Van Gogh expanded on that superb, almost panoramic effect in this *Montmartre: windmills and allotments* (cat. 93), for which he moved just a little to the left. It is almost as high as the Pittsburgh canvas (fig. 93d), but in order to give himself space for a wide view he made it about twice as wide. The dimensions, 45.2 x 81.3 cm, are not a standard size, the closest equivalent being the 54 x 81 cm of a *marine* 25. Van Gogh also opted for a squatter than *marine* format for two other landscapes of the period (see cats. 91, 92).

1 This later became a popular spot with artists. Alphonse Quizet (1885-1955) specialised in views from this part of the hill in the early 20th century; see Daulte *et al.* n.d., p. 14, no. 267, and Buisson/Parisot 1996, p. 8.
2 There is a similar early spring scene in F 348a JH 1221 (fig. 93d) and F 349 JH 1184. The trees are bare in the former, but there are flowers in the foreground. F 349 JH 1184 is always dated to the autumn of 1886, but the leaves sprouting on the trees show that that is incorrect. See also pp. 43 and 45, notes 21 and 27.
3 That building also features in F 350 JH 1245; see also fig. 91a and Martigny 2000, p. 174.
4 They are clearly visible in F 272 JH 1183.
5 Another is F 273 JH 1116, which probably dates from the late spring. F 274 JH 1115 (fig. 93b) was painted later, most likely in August, judging by the sunflowers in the allotments. F 1397 JH 1173, which is a drawing, looks very like these two paintings, but it shows the mill from a different direction – the north. It was an exploratory study for F 266 JH 1175 and cats. 64, 65.
6 Van Gogh tried to eliminate that symmetry in his very first painting of the Blute-fin, F 273 JH 1116, by adding a second mill in the background which had never stood there.
7 The painting, F 348a JH 1221 (fig. 93d), shows an artist working at a field easel by the fence halfway down the hill. Van Gogh depicted him at roughly the same spot he had taken up for the preceding drawing (F 1396 JH 1222; fig. 93c). This shows that he had more of a sense of humour than he is sometimes credited with. As viewers we are seeing the mill in a heavily manipulated, 'inaccurate' form, but the 'incorrect' proportions in the painting would have been correct to the painted artist. To put it another way, he is probably depicting the mill in his painting in the same size as it has in this work, and that can only be a humorous allusion to Van Gogh's manipulation of reality.



93 Montmartre: windmills and allotments



93a Photograph of the hill of Montmartre, c. 1900. From Leprohon 1964, p. 240.



93b *The Blute-fin windmill, Montmartre* (F 274 JH 1115), 1886. Glasgow, Glasgow Museums, Art Gallery and Museum, Kelvingrove.

Van Gogh used a coarsely woven, poor-quality canvas that was ready-primed with a white ground (Table 3.5, no. 36). Paint cross-sections reveal that the landscape is painted on top of another scene, but infrared and X-ray examination failed to reveal what it is. The size of the canvas matches that of Van Gogh's large still lifes from the summer of 1886, so it is not impossible that the original scene is an unsatisfactory work from that series.[8] The open weave of the canvas, at any rate, points to a Paris origin. The hidden painting also contains Naples yellow, a pigment that he seems to have dropped from his palette after the summer of 1886.[9]

Van Gogh covered over the first scene with pale blueish grey paint which he applied in several layers until he had a smooth surface. The composition of these layers, which contain lead white, zinc white and a bit of French ultramarine, is the same as that in *Impasse des Deux Frères* (cat. 92) and *View from Theo's apartment* (cat. 95). In order to establish the correct field of view for his new scene he drew a perspective frame on the intermediate layer (fig. 93e), the lines of which are visible to the naked eye. Van Gogh usually took a perspective frame which was closest to the size of his canvas,[10] but he chose a much smaller one of the standard *figure* 6 size (41 x 33 cm), as he had done in cat. 92, which he turned through 90. He put it in the centre of the canvas but moved it down by around 3.5 cm, so that the horizontal centre line, which would mark the horizon, lay quite low down, which virtually eliminated the effect of a sloping hillside.

Lines sketched with what looks like graphite can be seen under infrared light and here and there with the naked eye as well. The mill was placed about two-thirds of the way up, and here Van Gogh was probably following his previous painting (fig. 93d). The other drawn, freehand lines only partly match the finished scene. For example, there are houses approximately 10 cm above the painted buildings and hill, and the belvedere was placed higher up than in the drawing. There are also small sheds on the horizon in the drawing which were omitted in the painted version, as were a building behind the Poivre and roofs to the left of the Blute-fin. The latter belonged to an apartment block in impasse des Deux Frères which Van Gogh did include in his preceding painting (fig. 93d).

The thinly painted landscape was completed in a single session apart from a few linear and colour accents and the signature. Muted blue, green and beige predominate. As with *Impasse des Deux Frères* (cat. 92), the palette departs from the

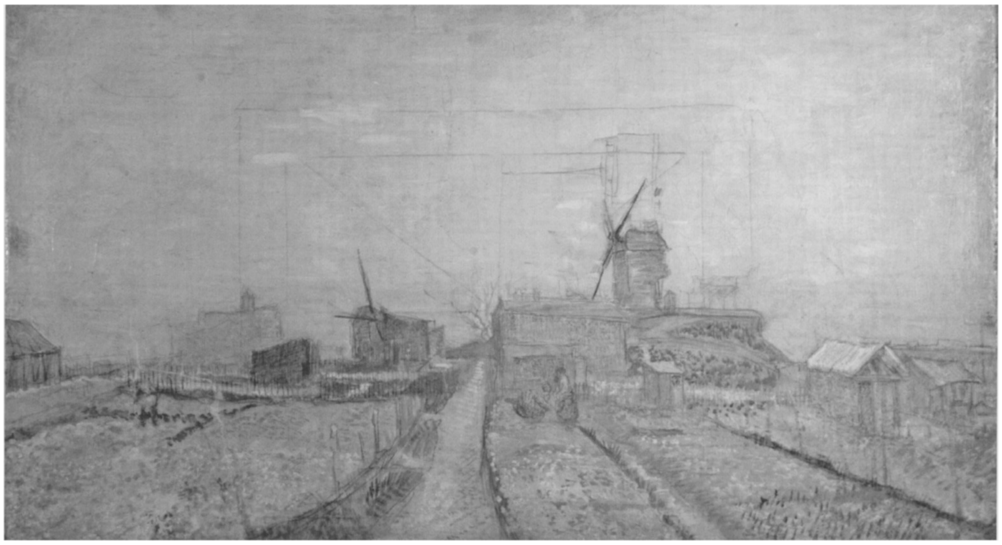
8 On this see also cat. 92, note 12.
9 Of the works in the museum, Van Gogh last used this pigment in cat. 65.
10 Certainly when he placed it in the centre of the picture surface; see pp. 120-121.



93c *Gardens in Montmartre and the Blute-fin windmill* (F 1396 JH 1222), 1887. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



93d *The Blue-fin windmill* (F 348a JH 1221), 1887. Pittsburgh, Carnegie Museum of Art.



93e Infrared reflectogram of cat. 93.

secondary colour schemes that Van Gogh was so fond of in his still lifes in this period (cats. 85-90). The brushwork is very varied. Van Gogh worked the sky up with the same kind of broad, horizontal strokes he had used in his view of the lane leading off rue Girardon (cat. 92), defined the buildings with fine, sometimes brightly coloured lines and filled large swathes of colour with dots. He had already resorted to the brightly coloured *pointille* to some extent in his *Impasse des Deux Frères* (cat. 92), but now he employed it far more forcefully, as can be seen from the sheds composed of blue dots and in the path with the allotments in the foreground, which are stippled orange, blue and green. There are also striking white and very pale pink strokes which originally took the form of a saturated pink, for which Van Gogh used an organic red identified as cochineal which lost its colour through the action of light.

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
Bonger 1890, no. 76 [Moulin de la galette (20)]?; Druet 1920, no. 20110; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 97, vol. 2, pl. XCVI; De la Faille 1939, p. 206, no. 265; London 1968-69, p. 63, no. 74; De la Faille 1970, pp. 162, 624, 625; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 92, 99, 157, 165, 202, note 23; Hulsker 1977, p. 277; Hulsker 1980, p. 277; Amsterdam 1987, p. 330, no. 1.142; Amsterdam 1988, p. 102, no. 42; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 89; Pickvance 1988, pp. 94, 96; Tokyo 1995, pp. 56, 57, 121, no. 4; Hulsker 1996, p. 277; Amsterdam/Pittsburgh 2000-01, pp. 164, 165; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 118, 124; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 48, 49, 60, 68, 73, note 44, p. 74, note 74; Coyle 2007, p. 312; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 91, 286, 307; Essen 2010-11, p. 303, no. 30.

EXHIBITIONS
1896-97 Paris, no cat. [Ffr. 250]?; 1901-02 Berlin, no cat.? (Dfl. 450); 1905 Amsterdam I, no. 84 [Dfl. 1,100]; 1906 Rotterdam, no. 22 [Dfl. 1,300]; 1906 Middelburg, no cat.; 1908 Paris, no. 18 [Ffr. 3,800]; 1908 Munich, no. 21 (Dfl. 1,600); 1908 Dresden, no. 21 [Dfl. 1,600]; 1908 Frankfurt am Main, no. 23 (for sale); 1908 Zürich, no. 14; 1908 The Hague & Amsterdam, no cat. known, no. 11; 1908 Berlin II, no cat. known [Dfl. 2,200]; 1909-10 Munich, no. 14, Frankfurt am Main, Dresden & Chemnitz, no cat. known [Dfl. 2,500]; 1911 Amsterdam, no. 22 [Dfl. 3,000]; 1911-12 Hamburg, no cat. known [DM.? 3,000]; 1911-12 Bremen, no cat.; 1912 Dresden & Breslau, no. 22 (not for sale); 1920 New York, no. 51 [$9,000]; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 33; 1928 Berlin, no. 30; 1928 Frankfurt am Main, no. 19; 1928 Vienna, no. 17; 1928-29 Hanover, Munich & Leipzig, no cat., no. 14, no cat. known; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 38; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1946 Maastricht & Heerlen, no. 43; 1946 Stockholm, Gothenburg & Malmö, no. 25; 1946 Copenhagen, no. 25; 1947-48 London, Birmingham & Glasgow, no. 21; 1948 Bergen & Oslo, no. 15; 1948 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 97; 1949-50 New York & Chicago, no. 49; 1951 Lyon & Grenoble, no. 18; 1951 Arles, no. 18; 1951-52 Nijmegen & Alkmaar, no. 6; 1952 Enschede, no. 26; 1952 Eindhoven, no. 21; 1953 The Hague, no. 84; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 80; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 68; 1954-55 Bern, no. 20; 1955 Antwerp, no. 182; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 93; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 22; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 23; 1960-61 Paris, no. 194; 1961 Paris, no. 120; 1961 Humlebæk, no. 76; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 26; 1968-69 London, no. 74; 1971-72 Paris, no. 44; 1972-73 Strasbourg & Bern, no. 8; 1976-77 Tokyo, Kyoto & Nagoya, no. 38; 1988 Amsterdam, no. 42; 1995 Tokyo, no. 4; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 25; 2000-01 Amsterdam & Pittsburgh, unnumbered [only Amsterdam]; 2002-03 Treviso, no. 148; 2005 Tokyo, Osaka & Nagoya, no. 36; 2010-11 Essen, no. 30.

94
Boulevard de Clichy

Paris, March-mid-April 1887
Oil on canvas
46.0 x 55.3-55.5 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 94 V/1962
F 292 JH 1219

Street scenes had long been part of Van Gogh's repertoire, but in Paris he produced hardly any. One fine exception is this view of a boulevard near Theo's apartment, and that association may have held a special meaning for Jo van Gogh-Bonger, for she hung this painting in the living room of her house in Bussum, along with *The potato eaters* of 1885 and *The harvest* of 1888.[1]

It is a view of boulevard de Clichy near place Blanche seen from the south, on the corner of rue Fontaine and rue Blanche. The view is to the northwest, so rue Lepic on the far side of the square is just out of sight on the right (fig. 94a). The trees on the central reservation of the boulevard are completely bare, so the painting can be dated between March and mid-April 1887.[2]

This western end of the long boulevard was not a neutral, impersonal spot for Van Gogh. The studio of Fernand Cormon, where he had studied during his first few months in Paris, was at no. 104, in the far right background. Georges Seurat and Paul Signac lived further up on that side of the boulevard, at nos. 128bis and 130 respectively, which are out of the picture. It was for this reason that Van Gogh associated the boulevard with the Post-Impressionist avant-garde. He spoke of the artists of the 'petit boulevard' [584, 620], who included not only the Neo-Impressionists but also up-and-coming young artists like Bernard and himself, who had their studios in the neighbourhood.

This painting has often been associated with Signac's view of boulevard de Clichy from the winter of 1885-86, which shows the same spot but from the other side of the street (fig. 94b).[3] The Neo-Impressionist had entered his painting in the eighth and last Impressionist exhibition in the summer of 1886, where Van Gogh would undoubtedly have seen it, but it is extremely doubtful that that snow-covered scene inspired him to produce his own version nine months later, as has been suggested. He was not in the least bit interested in the very latest artistic developments during his first year in Paris, and with the exceptions of Degas's nudes and Monet's landscapes considered the work of the avant-garde to be 'careless, ugly, badly painted, badly drawn, bad in colour, everything that's miserable' [626].

Van Gogh also made a fairly large drawing of this spot, which was his first exploration of the subject (fig. 94c).[4] The central element in that sheet was the vista, which gradually dictated his field of view and revealed compositional problems. For example, the standard height of the sheet was not enough to accommodate the building on the left, which actually consists of five storeys, of which he could only include four. In addition, while he was sketching he discovered that the foreground on the right was very large and looked decidedly empty, which he tried to remedy at the end by inserting two large figures of women.

Van Gogh applied those lessons in this painting (cat. 94). There was no longer a problem with the house on the left, because the canvas was high enough, and he

1 Letters 1952, vol. 4, p. 248.
2 Only the tree on the right is an evergreen. The top of it, with its sprinkling of foliage, can be seen beyond the snow-covered roof on the right in Signac's painting (fig. 94b). It was said in Drawings 3, p. 221, that the trees on the central reservation are in bud, but the stippling there must be regarded as an attempt to make the technique more unified. If only lines had been used here they would have been too much at odd with the rest.
3 For this painting see Paris etc. 2001, pp. 110, 111, no. 13, and Cachin/Ferretti-Bocquillon 2000, p. 172, no. 115.
4 This sheet is dated February-March 1887 in Drawings 3, pp. 221-23, cat. 290.



94 Boulevard de Clichy



94a Photograph of boulevard de Clichy, February 2005.



94b Paul Signac, *Snow, boulevard de Clichy, Paris*, 1886. Minneapolis, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

depicted all five storeys. He only showed the corner of the building, which was the part that had interested him in the drawing. He employed a few neat tricks to make the empty foreground less noticeable. He brought the central reservation forward, for example, and then cleverly linked the street with the foreground by looking down on it a little rather than across it, enticing the viewer into the scene, as it were. He also made the apartment block on the other side of the boulevard much higher than in his sketch, so that it catches the eye and draws attention away from the empty foreground.

The scene is on a loosely woven, poor-quality *figure* 10 canvas with a lead white-based ground that was applied very thinly with a brush onto the picture area only (Table 3.5, no. 30). This lean application created a relatively absorbent surface in which the texture of the weave was still clearly visible. Van Gogh quite often chose absorbent surfaces for his *à l'essence* paintings of early 1887 (bare wooden panel for cats. 81 and 82, unprepared *carton* for cat. 85, and a thin lead white-based ground on finely woven canvas for cat. 87) which, with the exception of cat. 85, also offered lively surface texture. They invariably played an important part in the look of the finished picture, and that is certainly the case with this street scene. The white of the ground lends luminosity to the thin paints on top, and it was also left visible between individual brushstrokes, so that its light undertone unites the different passages.

The scene was painted wet-into-wet in a single session, with perhaps only the last, sharp, linear details in the chimneys and trees being added in the studio rather than on the spot. Van Gogh began with a preliminary drawing, for which he normally used graphite or charcoal (cats. 92, 93, 95), but in this case he chose a liquid medium. Infrared light, in any event, revealed a few very faint, schematic construction lines, mainly for the horizontals and verticals of the buildings in the left and right foreground, but also with a slanting line in the sky that runs across the top of the chimney pots on the right. The drawing is almost invisible, and examination of the paint surface with the microscope showed that the lines consist almost exclusively of medium and barely any pigment. What is also surprising is that they were also applied while Van Gogh was painting, or at least they sometimes appear to lie on top of the paint.

Van Gogh's choice of this 'invisible' drawing material appears to have been



94c *Boulevard de Clichy* (F 1393 JH 1217), 1886. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

deliberate. He knew that, in contrast to his preceding works (cats. 92, 93), he would not be defining the buildings with contour lines but with colour contrasts and the direction of the brushstrokes, which between them would have to make it clear where one form stopped and the other began. His customary underdrawing in graphite or charcoal would nullify that result, but because he wanted some kind of guide while he was painting he may have decided on this more transparent material.[5]

After making the drawing he began laying in an initial monochrome sketch in which the volumes of the buildings were indicated with large swathes of pale, highly thinned greys that look more like watercolours than oils. The very fluid paint collected mainly in the troughs of the weave, enhancing its visible structure. He then switched to bright colours and, for the first time in a *plein-air* study, used the secondary colours of violet, green-blue and orange alternated with bright blue, red, warm green and brown. He was lavish with cobalt violet, as he had been in his preceding still lifes (cats. 89, 90), and sample analysis in this case showed that it had had some cochineal and natural indigo added, probably commercially (p. 139, fig. 69). The colours look remarkably fresh and bright, and unlike other thinly painted works of this period there has been very little discolouration. It is only in the outline of the pavement on the far side of the street and the roof on the far right that the organic red – cochineal with Kopp's purpurin – has taken on a brownish tint.

Van Gogh had used short and long brushstrokes and small round dots in his earlier landscapes (cats. 92, 93), and he now continued with that graphic approach. He had previously painted his skies with broad strokes, but now he was self-confident enough to try out his new draughtsman-like style there too, using fairly horizontal strokes. Those in the buildings are both vertical and horizontal, but he switched to diagonal ones for the street, which accentuated the effect of drawing the eye into the picture. He no longer drew the outlines of the buildings with paint, as he had previously done (cats. 92, 93), but filled them in loosely with dabs and streaks. The strokes have run together into a semitransparent, rather hazy layer in places where the paint is extremely thin. Like Toulouse-Lautrec, whom he was imitating (see fig. 90a), he was not bothered about the paint running, as it did near the tall building on the far side of the boulevard (p. 139, fig. 69).

5 The pronounced texture of the thinly primed canvas (itself a departure from the relatively smooth surfaces of cats. 92 and 95, which have intermediate ground layers) would perhaps also have made it difficult to draw fine lines with the usual dry drawing materials. Van Gogh's method was traditional; 17th-century painters also matched their drawing materials to the way in which they wanted to render the contours. See Van Eikema Hommes/Speleers 2005, p. 42.

Interestingly, while he was painting Van Gogh used a pointed object, probably the handle of his brush, to scratch the figure of a woman with a flapping coat into the paint on the right. It was evidently an *aide-mémoire* to remind him to paint her in there later. He did not do so, though, or else, when he finally had paint on his brush, he discovered that she had walked on and had become the woman on the left, who has the same shape.

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
Bonger 1890, no. 75 [Boulevard de Clichy (10)]; Bremmer 1909, vol. 2, no. 10; Druet 1920, no. 20091; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 84, vol. 2, pl. LXXIX; De la Faille 1939, p. 274, no. 374; Cooper 1955, p. 50; Amsterdam 1958, no. 196; Van Gogh 1958, p. LXVI; Stellingwerff 1959, pp. 94, 95; Graetz 1963, pp. 52, 54; London 1968-69, p. 62, no. 70; De la Faille 1970, pp. 144, 147, 622; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 99, 165, 175, 185, 232; Hulsker 1977, pp. 270, 274; Hulsker 1980, pp. 270, 272; Amsterdam 1987, p. 330, no. 1.140; Feilchenfeldt 1988, pp. 86, 87; Paris 1988, pp. 90, 91, no. 26; Pickvance 1988, p. 94; Hulsker 1996, pp. 270, 274; Lurie 1996, pp. 164, 165; Tokyo 1997, pp. 50, 51, 135, no. 5; Amsterdam 2003, p. 269, no. 134; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 118, 124, 129, 132; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 67, 74, note 78; Van Heugten 2005, p. 46; Van Heugten 2008, pp. 41, 43; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 82, 286, 306.

EXHIBITIONS
1905 Berlin I, no. 14 [DM. 1,800]; 1905 Amsterdam I, no. 54 [not for sale]; 1905 Hamburg, no. 36 [not for sale]; 1905 Dresden, no. 32; 1905 Berlin II, no cat.; 1906 Vienna, no. 38 (for sale); 1908 Paris, no. 19 [not for sale]; 1908 Munich, no. 9 (not for sale); 1908 Dresden, no. 9 [not for sale]; 1908 Frankfurt am Main, no. 12 (for sale); 1908 The Hague & Amsterdam, no cat. known, no. 9; 1908 Berlin II, no cat. known [not for sale]; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 32; 1926 Venice, no. 26; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1946 Maastricht & Heerlen, no. 36; 1946 Stockholm, Gothenburg & Malmö, no. 35; 1946 Copenhagen, no. 37; 1946-47 Liège, Brussels & Mons, no. 53; 1947 Paris, no. 54; 1947 Geneva, no. 55; 1947 Groningen, no. 29; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 71; 1952 Enschede, no. 20; 1952 Eindhoven, no. 24; 1953 The Hague, no. 71; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 81; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 75; 1955 Antwerp, no. 183; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 94; 1957 Marseille, no. 30; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 20; 1960-61 The Hague, unnumbered; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 27; 1968-69 London, no. 70; 1969-70 Los Angeles, Saint Louis & Philadelphia, no. 16; 1970-71 Baltimore, San Francisco & New York, no. 16; 1971-72 Paris, no. 29; 1972 Bordeaux, no. 8; 1972-73 Strasbourg & Bern, no. 6; 1976-77 The Hague, no. 21; 1977 Düsseldorf, no. 49; 1985-86 Niigata, Iwaki, Shimonoseki, Amagasaki & Tokyo, no. 2; 1988 Paris, no. 26; 1997 Tokyo, no. 5; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 24; 2001 Saint Louis & Frankfurt am Main, unnumbered [only Frankfurt am Main]; 2002 Sapporo & Kobe, no. 26; 2003 Amsterdam I, no. 134.

95
View from Theo's apartment

Paris, late March-mid-April 1887
Oil on canvas
45.9 x 38.1 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 57 V/1962
F 341 JH 1242

Underlying image: portrait or self-portrait (fig. 95i)
After March 1886

Unlike the previous apartment in rue Laval, the one that Theo rented in rue Lepic in June 1886 had an attractive view. Up until then the brothers had looked out on an inner courtyard,[1] but now they had a magnificent, panoramic vista over the roofs of Paris – from the front of the apartment at least, which is where the living room and Theo's bedroom were.[2] 'The remarkable thing about our flat,' Theo wrote in July 1887, 'is that from the windows we have a magnificent view across the city with the hills of Meudon, St Cloud etc. on the horizon, and a piece of sky above it that is almost as big as when one stands on the dunes. With the different effects created by the variations in the sky it is a subject for I don't know how many paintings.'[3]

Vincent had already recorded that view four times when Theo wrote those words. He first did so in June 1886, not long after they had moved into the apartment (fig. 56d).[4] The second time was in early 1887, when he made a drawing, the present painting and another study in oils in quick succession (fig. 95a, cat. 95, fig. 95b).[5] They were probably exploratory exercises in preparation for a large, fully fledged painting which he never got round to. He had painted the views from the places where he lived since his time in Antwerp (see cats. 49, 56), but in this particular case he had a heightened interest in the subject.

In contrast to his first small study of 1886 (fig. 56d), Van Gogh included the surrounding architecture in these later views. He could have got that idea from Bernard's *Village street in Saint-Briac* of late 1886, which has almost the same division of the picture surface as cat. 95 (fig. 95c), but it is more likely that they had a shared source of inspiration in Japanese prints, in which distant views are often combined with large objects in the foreground (fig. 95d).[6] Van Gogh had started collecting those prints in the winter of 1886-87, and the composition of this *View from Theo's apartment* shows how strongly he was being influenced by the sheets in his collection. The perspective with three large masses that almost collide with each other is a little awkward, and as such is along Japanese lines, that is to say rather awkward by traditional western standards.

Like the 1886 study, the view in all three works is towards the southwest. On the left and in the centre are two apartment blocks in nearby rue Joseph de Maistre, while the building on the right is 41 rue Lepic, across the street from the brothers' apartment. The block to the left of it had been demolished, with the serrated left

1 Van Gogh also painted the view from that apartment but later painted it over; see cat. 73, figs. 73c, 73d.

2 The fourth-floor apartment (see cat. 56, note 6), which has remained largely unchanged, was described by Jo van Gogh-Bonger in 1914 as consisting of 'three reasonably large rooms, a tiny study and a little kitchen. The living room was comfortable and cosy. [...] Next to that was Theo's bedroom. Vincent slept in the study, and behind that was the studio, an ordinary room with one not particularly large window' (letter 568, note 1). That window was at the back, and the view from it is recorded in cat. 56. The hills of Meudon were visible from Theo's bedroom and the living room, each of which had a window. The bedroom window was the one on the right as seen from the street.

3 Theo van Gogh to Caroline van Stockum-Haanebeek, 10 July 1887 (b 727): 'Het merkwaardige van onze woning is dat men uit de ramen een prachtig uitzicht over de stad heeft met aan den voorkant de heuvels van Meudon, St Cloud enz: en een stuk lucht erboven bijna zoo groot als wanneer men op het duin staat. Met de verschillende effecten door de variatie van de lucht voortgebracht is het een sujet voor ik weet niet hoeveel schilderijen'. See also letter 569, note 9.

4 Ronald Pickvance was the first to recognise that F 265 JH 1100 (fig. 56d) was the view from Theo's apartment (Pickvance 1988, p. 98). Van Gogh would have painted it at the beginning of June 1886, at the same time as the view over the rooftops from the back of the apartment (cat. 56).

5 It was long assumed, but wrongly, that this was the view from Vincent's room (De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 96, no. 341a; De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 122, no. 1391; and De la Faille 1939, no. 398, p. 289), and that was followed by almost everyone.

6 This compositional invention and the influence of Japanese models on the work of the Post-Impressionists is discussed in Varnedoe 1990, pp. 53-80.



95 View from Theo's apartment



95a *View from the apartment in rue Lepic* (F 1391 JH 1220), 1887. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

edge being the remains of the brickwork that formerly connected the two buildings. In the distance, between the gap, are the hills of Meudon and the southern section of Montmartre cemetery, with the Palais du Trocadéro on the horizon.[7] Today the view of the hills is hidden behind an early 20th-century development, while the building in rue Lepic and the two blocks in rue Joseph de Maistre have undergone minor alterations (fig. 95e).[8]

Van Gogh was searching in his studies for the best combination of the vista and the large foreground elements. The drawing, which would have been the first of the three works (fig. 95a), is of the view from the window of Theo's bedroom,[9] but even as Van Gogh was drawing it he realised that he had not worked the composition out properly. His intuitive choice of a horizontal format proved to be unsuitable, for the detailed vista and the large buildings vie for precedence, and the apartment block on the right is far too dominant, so he only depicted the buildings schematically, and did not even finish the two on the left.

The painting in the Van Gogh Museum was next (cat. 95).[10] Van Gogh now decided to paint the view from the living room,[11] and solved the problem of the unbalanced composition by choosing a vertical rather than a horizontal format, reducing the width of the building on the right. It continued to dominate the scene, though, which is why he enlivened it not only with a rather indistinct figure on the top balcony, which might be a young girl, but also by making the serrated left edge of the building even more pronounced. This resolution of his problem draws the eye far mor effectively into the vista. There are drawbacks, though. The façade of the right acts as a repoussoir that is too close to the viewer, and the vista has been narrowed, restricting the horizon to a fraction of the width of the picture.

Van Gogh corrected these shortcomings in the final painting (fig. 95b). He reduced the size of the buildings so as to expand the horizon, which became as prominent as it is in the drawing (fig. 95a). All that is left of 41 rue Lepic is the distinctive left edge, while only the roof of the lowest apartment block in rue Joseph de Maistre is included. It was a successful solution which not only imparted more perspective and depth to the scene but also set up a better interaction between foreground and background, so it is interesting that the Dutch artist Meijer de Haan took this particular composition as the point of departure for his painting of the same subject when he came to stay with Theo in the winter of 1888-89 (fig. 95f).[12]

7 The drawing (fig. 95a) also shows the Arc de Triomphe in the distance, and since it could not be seen from the living room we know that the drawing was made from Theo's bedroom (kind communication from Teio Meedendorp). The paintings, though (cat. 95, fig. 95b), do show the view from the living room, for the two towers of the Palais du Trocadéro, which are on the horizon on the far left in the drawing, are now in the middle. That building was thought to be the Tour Saint-Jacques in Toronto/Amsterdam 1981, p. 102, but that is situated far more to the east (on this see also cat. 66). The building was identified as Notre-Dame in Paris 1988, p. 94, no. 288, but that is also incorrect (see Drawings 3, p. 224). Thomson 2005, p. 66, believed that it was the church of Saint-Vincent de Paul.
8 An addition was made to the left of the low building in rue Joseph de Maistre, which led to a modification of the entire back of the apartment block. The facade of the house in rue Lepic has also been changed.
9 See note 7 above.
10 Welsh-Ovcharov in Paris 1988, p. 94, assumed that the other painting of the view (fig. 95b) was the first one, because it is not on canvas but artists' *carton*. We now know, though, that the version in the Van Gogh Museum is also on a cheap support – a reused canvas.
11 See note 7 above.
12 Toronto/Amsterdam 1981, p. 348, fig. 147. Meijer de Haan almost certainly saw the second oil sketch at Theo's, but if De la Faille 1970, p. 624, no. 341a, was right in saying that Toulouse-Lautrec was its first owner, that would mean that it only came into his possession after the winter of 1888-89.





95b *View from Theo's apartment* (F 341a JH 1243), 1887. Private collection.

95c Emile Bernard, *Village street in Saint-Briac*, 1886. Private collection.



95d Utagawa Hiroshige, *The maple leaves of Mama, Tekona shrine and Tsugi bridge*, 1857. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

Van Gogh had found the solution by chance, as it were, while working on his first painting (cat. 95). It is a stock *figure* 8 size (46 x 38 cm), which is confirmed by the stamp with that number on the back of the stretcher which, however, is probably not the original one (fig. 95g) (Table 3.5, no 37). In order to get a grasp on the subject he drew a stock *figure* 6 (41 x 33 cm) perspective frame on the canvas. The rather woolly lines, probably graphite, are almost impossible to make out with the naked eye but are clearly visible in the infrared (fig. 95h). The frame was drawn in the middle of the larger canvas. An investigation on the spot showed that he fitted the frame precisely within the window opening in the apartment in order to establish his field of view. The wires intersected at the point occupied by the prominent building on the horizon – the Palais du Trocadéro.[13] Of all the paintings examined for these collection catalogues, this is the only one with this kind of central point.[14]

Van Gogh then sketched in the buildings with a fair amount of detail using the drawn frame as his guide. The freehand lines are thicker and darker than those used for the frame and can quite easily be spotted with the naked eye. That drawing extends to the edges of the canvas on the right and at the bottom, so it runs over the drawing of the frame. Interestingly, the sketch stops exactly at the drawn inner edge of the frame on the left. It is as if he was suddenly struck by the idea while he was sketching that it would actually be better to reduce his field of view and did not extend the drawing to the left-hand edge of the canvas. He must have been pleased with the effect, because that narrower view was reproduced precisely in the next painting (fig. 95b). For that he once again used a *figure* 6 perspective frame, which he drew in the middle of a *figure* 8 *carton*, as can be seen with the naked eye. He backed off a little further into the room for this new painting, so that the view, which had at first only extended to the inner edge of the frame, now filled the entire support.

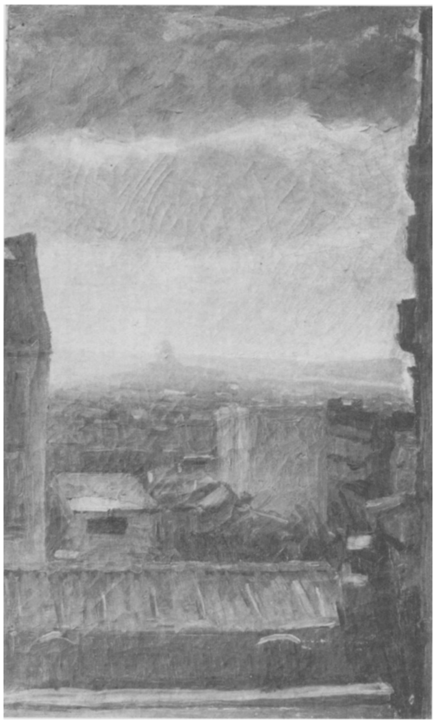
View from Theo's apartment (cat. 95) is painted on top of an earlier scene.[15] The X-radiograph is difficult to read (fig. 95i), but if the present painting is turned upside down it can be seen that it is a portrait of a man *en trois quarts*, and might

13 Using the intersection to fix the viewer's gaze on a point in the distance was a traditional method that was known as 'training' at the time [254].
14 The point of intersection in other paintings is masked by a fence (cat. 92), a hill (cat. 93), a wheatfield (cat. 110) or trees (cats. 111, 112).
15 Van Heugten 1995, p. 84, no. 19.

95e Photograph taken from Theo's apartment, 2001.

95f Meijer de Haan, *View from Theo's apartment*, 1888-89. Private collection.



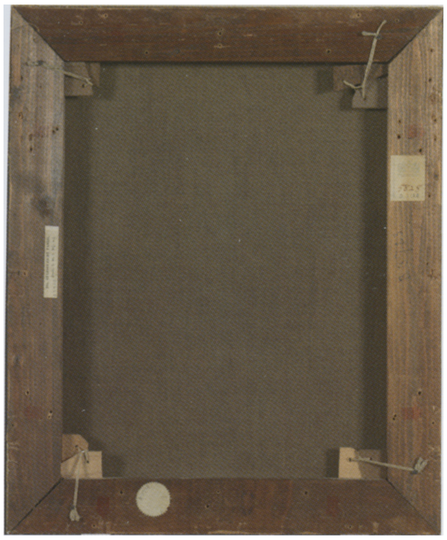


even be a self-portrait, because the man appears to have a beard.[16] Glimpses of underlying colour visible around the edges of the painting viewed with the microscope suggest that the portrait had a greenish-blue background. A very similar head, in size as well, is hidden beneath *People strolling in a park, Paris*, which dates from the autumn of 1886.[17] If they are indeed one and the same man, the two underlying images would have been painted not long after each other, and since the portrait under *People strolling in a park, Paris* must date from before the autumn of 1886 the same must be true of the one under *View from Theo's apartment*. The ground and the type of canvas of both works match and originated in Paris, which means that both the prior images must have been painted in the period March-autumn 1886.[18]

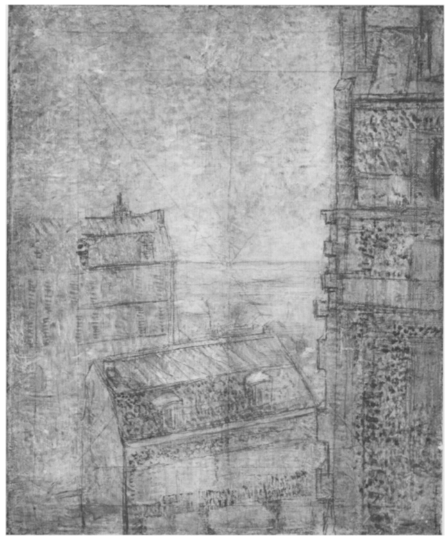
The portrait was scraped off roughly and then covered with a thin layer of greyish black. When that was completely dry Van Gogh prepared for the new scene by applying an opaque, cool white paint consisting of lead white, zinc white and some French ultramarine. An intermediate layer with exactly the same composition has been found on two other reused canvases from this period (cats. 92, 93). That light underlayer is clearly visible in all three works due to the loose brushwork and the thin paint (p. 116, fig. 34).

After making the drawn sketch Van Gogh began reinforcing the lines and filled the enclosed passages with streaks, strokes and dots, for which he used dark blue paint, going on to employ light blue, red, green, yellow and some orange to add detail to the landscape and architecture. The colours were used pure, generally thinned to a transparent layer, but were also mixed with white to obtain pale, more opaque tints. Blue predominates, although far less so than in the second oil sketch (fig. 95b), but the original colour balance was different. Van Gogh used a lot of yellow, and since he often combined it with the complementary purple in his *à l'essence* works, some of the present blue would originally have had that tint. Evidence for this is found at the right edge of the painting, where bluish-grey strokes have a different, more purplish tint at the points where they were covered by the frame. This fading points to the use of fugitive mixtures with blue and cochineal

16 It is striking that there are numerous white dots in the X-radiograph, which indicate that the lead-white ground penetrated between the threads of the canvas. Paint cross-sections show that the canvas was indeed sized, but that evidently did not form a sufficiently protective layer.
17 F 225 JH 1110; see Vergeest/Verbeek 2005, pp. 7-9.
18 Automated analysis of the canvas weave visible in X-rays of the two paintings identified an exact match in the pattern of weft threads, which run horizontally in F 225 JH 1110 and vertically in *View from Theo's apartment*, confirming that the two canvases were cut side by side from the same roll. Results cited from the Van Gogh Thread Count Automation Project, unpublished weave match report, C. Richard Johnson, Jr., Don. H. Johnson and Robert G. Erdmann, 2010.



95g Reverse of cat. 95.



95h Infrared photograph of cat. 95.



95i X-radiograph of cat. 95; inverted to show underlying image.

on a tin substrate, unlike the stabler cobalt violet, which he had preferred since the beginning of the year (see cat. 80). He probably chose purple and yellow for the main colours of his next painting of the subject (fig. 95b), but since it is now dominated by the same kind of blue it seems that the same sort of discolouration took place.

Like Van Gogh's other *à l'essence* paintings, this *View from Theo's apartment* can be regarded as an experiment in the method of placing pure, unmixed colours side by side as introduced by the Neo-Impressionists. However, he now departed from his earlier work by making fairly systematic use of their unrelenting method of dots and short brushstrokes, so it is likely that the work was influenced by the third exhibition of the Société des Artistes Indépendants, where he first studied the work of Neo-Impressionists like Signac and Seurat with a receptive, unjaundiced eye.[19] The painting would therefore have been made shortly after the exhibition opened on 26 March, and in any event before the middle of April, because the trees in the centre are completely bare, without even a trace of buds.[20]

Although dominant, the stippling is not dogmatic. Some passages, such as the buildings at lower left, were loosely filled in with blended strokes. Van Gogh scratched in the wet paint in the low apartment block at bottom centre, where the stippling had become too opaque, probably with the butt end of his brush. This exposed the white ground and gave the passage a varied texture that made it look less massive. Van Gogh used similar devices in other works of this period to soften strokes that had become too pronounced (see cats. 81, 82, 88). Another 'correction' to Neo-Impressionist brushwork can be seen in the sky, which was originally covered in bright blue dots which he then modified by covering most of them with small, opaque strokes of light blue and green, with the occasional dash of yellow and brownish red. There are no such modifications in the other painting (fig. 95b), in which the Pointillist brushwork is fairly consistent throughout. This is further evidence that that was not the first but the second version.

19 On this see p. 78.
20 It is invariably dated to the early spring in the literature, with the exception of Hulsker 1996, p. 277, who is less specific.

Provenance
1887-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1930-37 on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; 1962 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1962-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Literature
Bonger 1890, no. 92bis [Vue Paris (de l'appartement rue Lepic)]; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 96, vol. 2, pl. xcv; Bremmer 1930, vol. 4, p. 29, no. 29; De la Faille 1939, p. 284, no. 392; London 1968-69, p. 62, no. 72; De la Faille 1970, pp. 161, 624; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 99, 157, 165, 185, 233; Hulsker 1977, p. 277; Hulsker 1980, p. 277; Toronto/Amsterdam 1981, pp. 102, 103, no. 4; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 182, 183, 331, no. 1.151; Thomson 1987, p. 14; Amsterdam 1988, pp. 98-100, no. 40; Paris 1988, pp. 96, 97, no. 29; Pickvance 1988, p. 94; Glasgow/Amsterdam 1990-91 II, p. 163, no. 40; Van Heugten 1995, p. 84, no. 19; Tokyo 1995, pp. 58, 59, 121, no. 5; Hulsker 1996, p. 277; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 60, 67, 74, note 79; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 80, 286, 306.

Exhibitions
1905 Amsterdam I, no. 46 [Dfl. 500]; 1928 Berlin, no. 27; 1928 Frankfurt am Main, no. 16; 1928 Vienna, no. 15; 1928-29 Hanover, Munich & Leipzig, no cat., no. 12, no cat. known; 1930 Amsterdam, no. 23; 1932 Manchester, no. 33; 1936-37 Rotterdam, no. 14; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1946 Copenhagen, no. 42; 1946 Maastricht & Heerlen, no. 37; 1946 Stockholm, Gothenburg & Malmö, no. 40; 1947 Groningen, no. 32; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 95; 1951 Arles, no. 17; 1951 Lyon & Grenoble, no. 17; 1952 Eindhoven, no. 25; 1952 Enschede, no. 22; 1953 The Hague, no. 81; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 78; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 76; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 99; 1955 Antwerp, no. 190; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 17; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 28; 1968-69 London, no. 72; 1971-72 Paris, no. 42; 1972-73 Strasbourg & Bern, no. 7; 1976-77 The Hague, no. 20; 1977 Düsseldorf, no. 50; 1981 Toronto & Amsterdam, no. 4; 1988 Amsterdam, no. 40; 1988 Paris, no. 29; 1990-91 Glasgow & Amsterdam, no. 40 [only Amsterdam]; 1995 Tokyo, no. 5; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 1999-2000 Paris, no. 122.

96
Portrait of Léonie Rose Charbuy-Davy

Paris, March-April 1887
Oil on canvas
60.7 x 45.7 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 165 V/1962
F 369 JH 1206

The French critic Gustave Coquiot identified the sitter in this painting as the daughter of the Paris art dealer Pierre Firmin Martin (1817-91).[1] Now Martin had no children, but Coquiot's suggestion did lead to the identification of the woman as the art dealer's niece, Léonie Rose Charbuy-Davy (1858-?), who took her family to live with him immediately after his wife died in 1883, so the outside world would have thought that there was indeed a direct family connection.[2] Van Gogh undoubtedly got to know her through Martin, who had exhibited works of his in 1886.[3]

Adolphe-Felix Cals painted Léonie at the age of 16 (fig. 96a), and with a little bit of imagination one can make out the features of the woman in Van Gogh's portrait. The large, open eyes are the same, as are the small chin and the coiffure. However, she no longer has the full, round face she had in 1874. She may have grown out of it, but it is also possible that Van Gogh had difficulty capturing her likeness, for his drawn study of her (fig. 96b) shows a face that is closer to the one in Cals's portrait.

Van Gogh has portrayed her explicitly as a mother in this painting. In the right background is a bed, with the canopy in the middle and one end by the sofa.[4] It was the bed of Léonie's second daughter Germaine, who was born on 22 July 1885 and was thus between 1½ and 2 years old when this portrait was painted.[5] Van Gogh had always been fascinated by scenes of mothers with their children, but this was his first attempt to paint the subject.[6] There is a fire in the fireplace and a candle has been lit, possibly in order to suggest that this is a mother watching over her child at night. It is not clear whether the painting should be regarded as a genre scene or a portrait. It was not commissioned, anyway, because it has always been in the family collection.

The apartment would be Martin's home at 29 rue Saint-Georges. There are several paintings in large frames hanging above the sofa. The one in the middle is a landscape, and on the left is a figured piece containing a lot of blue. The object below the painting in the middle may be the statuette of a saint. The woman is sitting in the warmest part of the room, in front of the mantelpiece below which the fire is burning, casting a large orange-red glow on the brown floor. On the left in the fireplace are a pan and a small shovel.

The arrangement of the room is ambiguous. The position of the bed relative to the fireplace cannot easily be explained, and it is rather contradictory that the viewer is looking straight at the rear wall while the fireplace is seen side-on to the right. This contradiction suggests that the position of the fireplace was not painted from real life but was added to fill in the empty space beside Léonie, with Van Gogh simply resigning himself to the fact that it made the position of the bed illogical.

Léonie Charbuy-Davy is sitting on a chair with a back that is so prominent that she appears to be perched on the very front of the chair. Her hands are folded neatly in her lap, which is in accordance with the formula used for 17th-century Dutch

1 Coquiot did so in the manuscript for his 1923 biography of Van Gogh, which specifically mentions this painting (b 3348; see also pp. 147 and 310 in his book, and Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 225, who was the first to refer to these sources). Andries Bonger also knew her as the art dealer's daughter, as shown by his inventory of Theo's collection in which the painting is included under no. 311 as 'Portrait de la fille du Père Martin'. For information about Martin see Nonne 1988, pp. 341, 342.
2 Nonne 1988, pp. 342, 347, and notes 115-17. Charbuy-Davy was her uncle's only heir when he died in 1891 (ibid., pp. 342, 347, note 121).
3 On this see letter 718. Martin was a friend of Theo's, as we know from letter 876 (see also De Leeuw/Pabst 1988, p. 363), which is how Vincent would have first met him. He mentions him several times in his correspondence (letters 592, 634, 638).
4 So it is not a cradle, as was first asserted in Antwerp 1914 (no. 64). De la Faille adopted that in his oeuvre catalogue (De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 104), and it became common currency from then on (see also note 5).
5 There is a blue ribbon attached to the bed, which was interpreted in Drawings 3, p. 265, together with the idea that the bed was actually a cradle, as a reference to the birth of a son, which led the authors to doubt that this was the likeness of Léonie Charbuy-Davy. She did not have any sons, just two daughters: Germaine, and Alice, who was born on 19 April 1883. The association of the colour blue with boys (and pink with girls) was not customary at the time, and only caught on in the 20th century, although it has its roots in late 19th-century England (kind communication from Françoise Vitée, Musée Galliera, Musée de la Mode de la Ville de Paris).
6 Van Gogh did not return to the subject until 1888-89 with his many depictions of Augustine Roulin rocking a cradle. There, though, the child is clearly a baby, not a two-year-old as in the portrait of Léonie Charbuy-Davy.



96 Portrait of Léonie Rose Charbuy-Davy





96a Adolphe-Félix Cals, *Portrait of Léonie Rose Charbuy-Davy*, 1874. Senlis, Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie.

96b *Study for 'Portrait of Léonie Charbuy-Davy'* (F 1244bv JH 1151), 1887. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

portraits of women. The canopy is depicted in the background close to Léonie's head in the preparatory drawing, but since that rather interfered with the balance of the scene Van Gogh moved his own position to the right for the painting.[7] The thin paint and graphic brushwork have a lot in common with his *à l'essence* still lifes and landscapes from early 1887 (cats. 88-90, 92-94), but the abundant use of pastel shades and the light impasto are different. However, they are found in his other portraits from this period, which were also inspired by the work of Toulouse-Lautrec (cats. 83, 84). The painting is dated to both the winter of 1886 and the early spring of 1887, but we favour the latter because of the slightly more mixed, complex technique.

Portrait of Léonie Rose Charbuy-Davy is on a coarsely woven *paysage* 12 canvas of rather inferior quality (Table 3.5, no. 26). The ground is whitish and was brushed on thinly, covering just the picture area. Van Gogh applied a subdued, greyish sketch of the scene with highly thinned paints through which the luminosity and texture of the support are visible. Green, pink and blue patches can be seen in the background, and there is a greyish purple underneath Léonie's dress. The dirty, yellowed layer of varnish makes it difficult to gauge the precise shades.

The underpaint is very reminiscent of the tonal preparation of the large portrait of Agostina Segatori (cat. 84), although that was opaque, not thin, and was intended to cover up the underlying image. In the case of the present portrait, it looks as if Van Gogh rubbed off some of the paint while it was still wet (something he had done with cats. 52, 88 and 89), with the result that the extremely thin paint only remained behind in the deeper troughs of the canvas weave here and there. This 'worn' look may have been exacerbated by later overcleaning.

Van Gogh worked the scene up with a loose brush that left the underpaint clearly visible. He used generally contrasting hues within one and the same passage. Yellow and blue strokes on top of the greyish purple underlayer of the dress alternate with green, and he allowed pink and green to dominate over bright red, yellow and orange in the face and the bow, and to a lesser extent in the hands. The strokes are remarkably consistent in colour, and one sees the same paints throughout the picture. Van Gogh seems to have used ready-mixed colours from the tube, either that or he mixed them very carefully on his palette beforehand. The colours are more opaque than in his other works in the *à l'essence* technique, probably because he was working on a

7 Drawings 3, pp. 265, 266, no. 306.

grey underpaint instead of a light ground, which forced him to compensate for the loss of colour intensity. In order to cover the grey as much as possible he often mixed his colours with white to produce soft, sometimes almost chalk-like pastel tints. The red paints may have lost their force through the fading and/or browning of the organic red, and that is certainly what has happened in the sitter's hair. The strokes of what was originally deep red Kopp's purpurin are now a pallid brown colour.

The handling of the paint is extremely varied. Dots and delicate hatchings alternate with broad, spontaneous streaks, and in addition to fluid paints there are strokes of a thick, viscous consistency which amount to a delicate impasto here and there, for example in the face, where the thick paint was applied with a stiff brush. Elsewhere Van Gogh wiped across areas of the painted surface with an almost dry brush, and scratched a few short lines in the wet paint of the canopy. In order to preserve the slight impasto he added some touches of colour when the picture was dry, among them the horizontal turquoise strokes in the bluish figured painting in the left background, diagonal green strokes across the light impasto of the canopy, and some yellow strokes in Léonie's cuffs. The handling of the paint is very similar to that in the portrait of Agostina Segatori (cat. 84), although the graphic brushwork of dots and lines is far more pronounced in Léonie's, which accounts in part for the slightly later dating. Léonie's dress and Segatori's skirt are painted in a similar fashion, while a stylistic comparison of the canopy and the paintings in the background of cat. 96 and the prints on the wall of Segatori's café illustrates the close relationship between the two portraits.

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE

Bonger 1890, no. 311 [Portrait de la fille du père Martin (12)]; Van Gogh-Bonger 1914, p. I; Druet 1920, no. 20063; Van Gogh Mappe 1920, ill. II; Bremmer 1927, vol. 3, pp. 17, 18, no. 17; De la Faille 1927, ill. p. 17; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, pp. 103, 104, vol. 2, pl. CI; De la Faille 1939, p. 239, no. 318; Letters 1958, p. XLII; Stellingwerff 1959, pp. 95, 96; London 1968-69, p. 62, no. 71; De la Faille 1970, pp. 172, 173, 625, 626; Roskill 1970 II, p. 14; Orton 1971, p. 8, note 22; Brown Price 1975; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 175, 176, 195, 225; Hulsker 1977, pp. 266, 268, 280; Hulsker 1980, pp. 266, 268, 280; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 194, 195, 332, no. 1.152; Amsterdam 1988, pp. 101, 102, no. 41; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 91; Paris 1988, pp. 88, 89, no. 25; Van Lindert/Van Uitert 1990, pp. 56-58; Glasgow/Amsterdam 1990-91 I, p. 138, no. 28; Tokyo 1994, pp. 40, 41, 115, no. 4; Hulsker 1996, pp. 266, 268; Shackelford 2000, pp. 102, 123, ill. 91; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 118, 124, 127, 128; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 66; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 40, 292, 307.

EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam I, no. 76 [Dfl. 950]; 1908 Berlin I, no. 5 [Dfl. 1,500]; 1908 Frankfurt am Main, no. 30 (for sale); 1908 Zürich, no. 13; 1908 The Hague & Amsterdam, no cat. known, no. 13 [Dfl. 2,500]; 1908 Berlin II, no cat. known [Dfl. 2,500]; 1909-10 Munich, no. 11, Frankfurt am Main, Dresden & Chemnitz, no cat. known [Dfl. 3,000]; 1910 Leiden, no cat. known; 1911 Amsterdam, no. 12 [Dfl. 4,000]; 1911-12 Hamburg, no cat. known [DM.? 4,000]; 1911-12 Bremen, no cat.; 1912 Dresden & Breslau, no. 26 (not for sale); 1914 Antwerp, no. 64; 1914 Berlin, no. 33; 1914 Cologne & Hamburg, no cat. known; 1925 The Hague, no cat.; 1925 Potsdam, no. 38 (not for sale); 1926 Amsterdam, no. 37; 1927 Paris, no cat.; 1930 Amsterdam, no. 35; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 45; 1936-37 Rotterdam, no. 16; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1946 Maastricht & Heerlen, no. 34; 1946 Stockholm, Gothenburg & Malmö, no. 37; 1946 Copenhagen, no. 39; 1946-47 Liège, Brussels & Mons, no. 65; 1947 Paris, no. 66; 1947 Geneva, no. 67; 1947 Groningen, no. 44; 1947-48 London, Birmingham & Glasgow, no. 25; 1948 Bergen & Oslo, no. 18; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 100; 1949 Middelburg, no. 16; 1950 Hilversum, no. 18; 1951-52 Nijmegen & Alkmaar, no. 7; 1952 Enschede, no. 25; 1952 Eindhoven, no. 27; 1953 The Hague, no. 89; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 84; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 77; 1954 Zürich, no. 18; 1954-55 Bern, no. 28; 1955 Antwerp, no. 193; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 101; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 16; 1956 Leeuwarden, no. 16; 1957 Breda, no. 41; 1957 Marseille, no. 33; 1957-58 Leiden & Schiedam, no. 14; 1958 Deventer, no. 12; 1958 Mons, no. 13; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 24; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 24; 1960-61 Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg & Toronto, no. 30; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 25; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 25; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 33; 1968-69 London, no. 71; 1971-72 Paris, no. 47; 1972-73 Strasbourg & Bern, no. 12; 1988 Paris, no. 25; 1988 Amsterdam, no. 41; 1990-91 Glasgow & Amsterdam, nos. 28 and 41 respectively; 1994 Tokyo, no. 4; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 23; 2000-01 Detroit, Boston & Philadelphia, unnumbered; 2001 Norfolk, no cat.

97
Paris, March-June 1887
Oil on *carton*
19.0 x 14.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 155 V/1962
F 267 JH 1224

98
Paris, March-June 1887
Oil on *carton*
41.0 x 33.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 65 V/1962
F 356 JH 1248

97
Self-portrait

98
Self-portrait

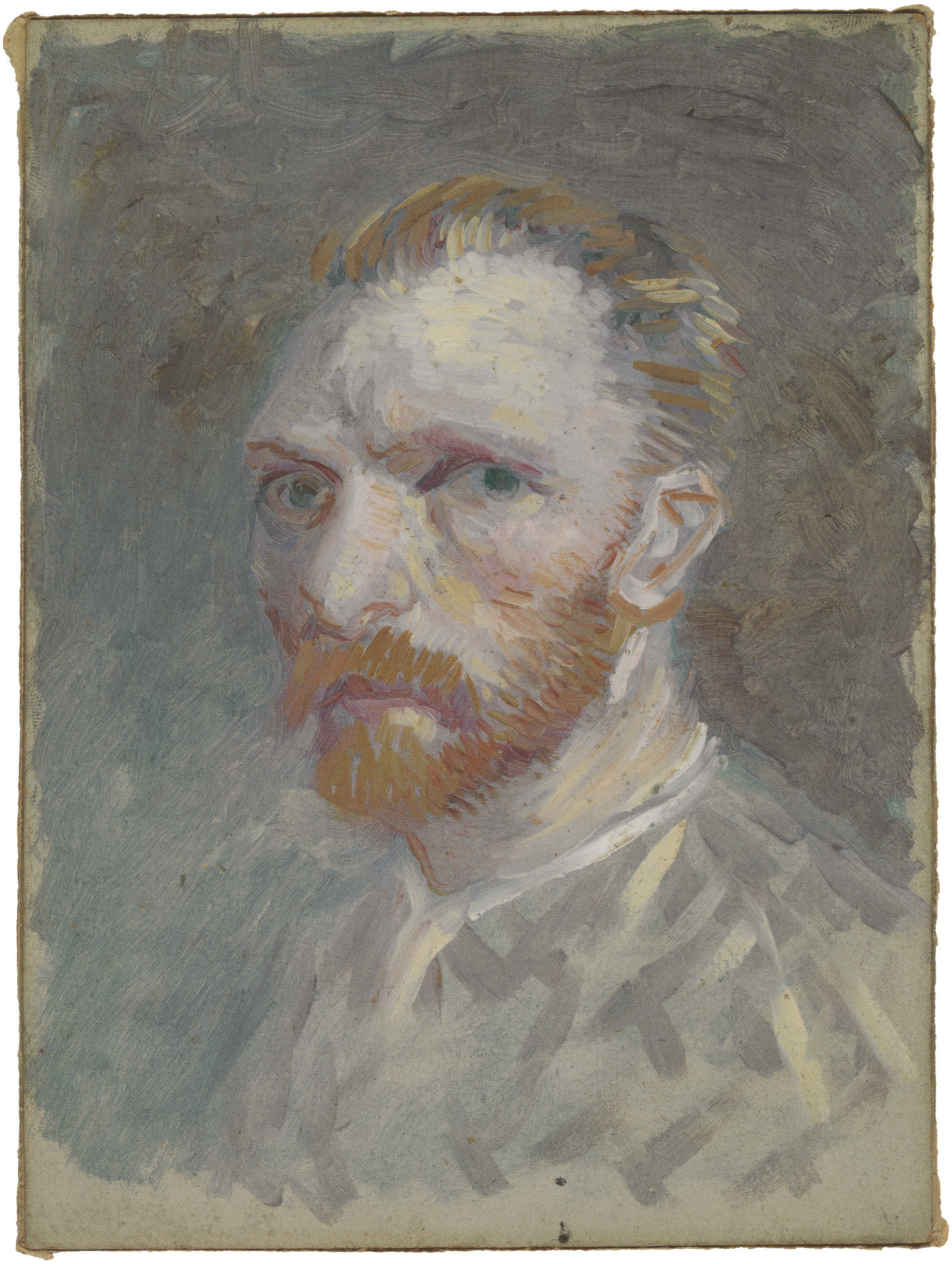
After his two self-portraits from around the turn of the year 1886-87 (cats. 76, 77) Van Gogh painted his own likeness a further 21 times, at least, before he left Paris,[1] mostly on cheap supports.[2] At first he used *carton* (cat. 97, figs. 97b, 97c, 97d, cats. 98, 122, 125, fig. 125a), but in the summer he also painted them on the backs of works from Nuenen (cats. 116-20, figs. 116f, 116g).[3] Soon after that he began experimenting with cotton as a support (cat. 130) and painted one self-portrait on top of another scene (cat. 129). He had also started working on linen, and by the end of the year he had become sufficiently ambitious in the genre to start using a good quality of canvas with a twill weave (cat. 137).

The first of the two self-portraits discussed here (cat. 97) is one of the smallest works Van Gogh ever made, along with a self-portrait from the summer of 1887 (cat. 122) and a portrait of Theo (cat. 121). They are all on supports of the standard *figure* 0 size (19 x 14 cm), which is the number on the stamp on the back of this painting (fig. 97a). Van Gogh did not use this small size for paintings of other subjects, and took the slightly larger *figure* 1 size (32 x 24 cm) for a self-portrait now in the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo (fig. 97b).[4]

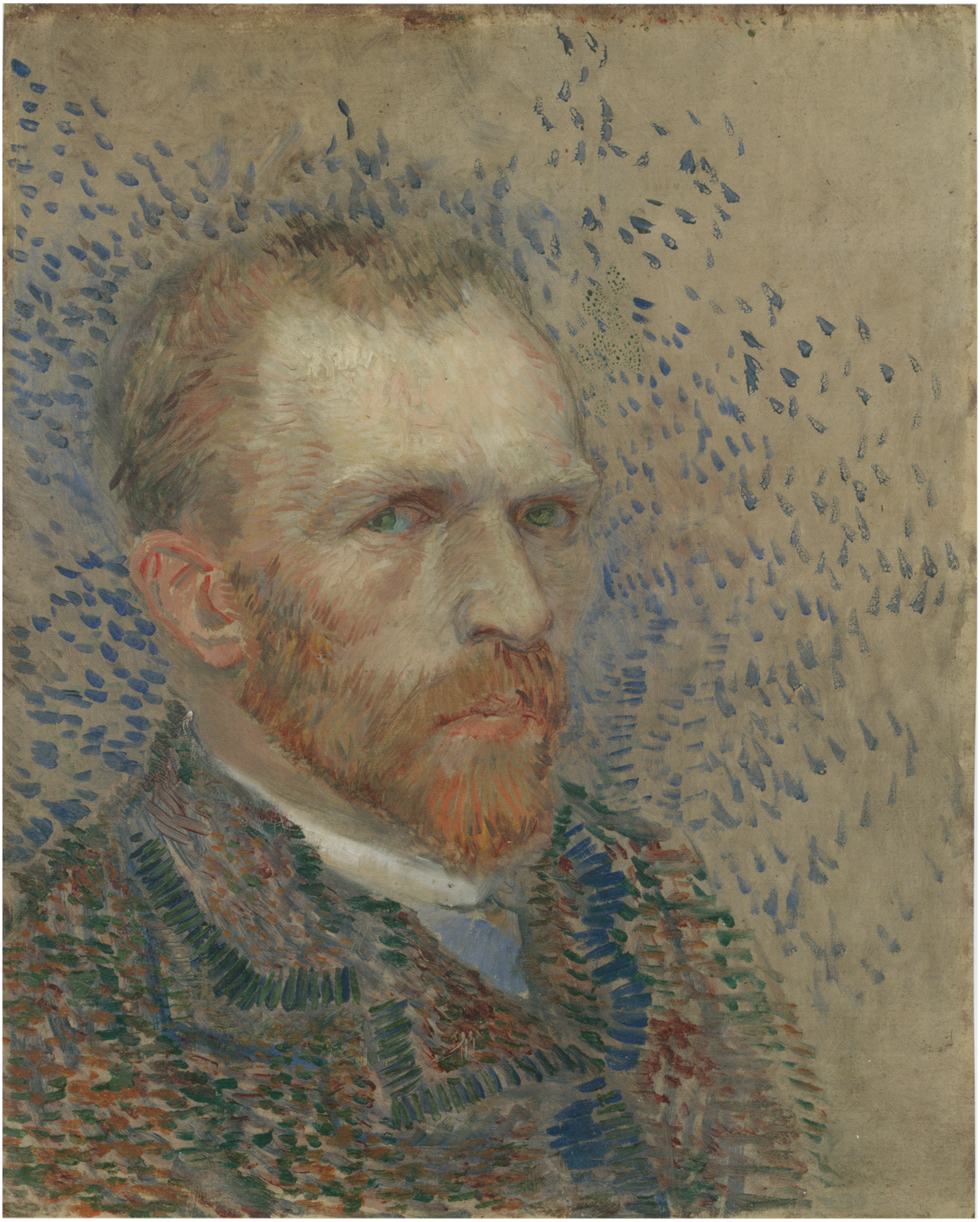
Unlike the small detailed portraits of Theo and himself from the summer of 1887 (cats. 119-21), this small picture is sketchily executed, and the same is true of the one in the Kröller-Müller Museum (fig. 97b), although to a lesser extent. The *carton* support of cat. 97 has a light grey ground that is exposed at the edges. Van Gogh painted blue-grey washes on top which are still very apparent in the white of the eye and in the clothing, which is suggested with zigzag strokes. He then worked up the portrait, in which there is no underdrawing to be seen, with strokes that are quite broad for the size of the support.

Van Gogh was above all interested in the tonal relationships in his face. This is indicated not only by the choice of a blue-grey undertone but also by the heavily accentuated light passages. He first applied the shadows with thin purple and then worked towards the light with increasingly opaque but still fluid paints. The palette is muted, the only accents being the green in the eyes, the ochre of the beard and the wine red of the lips. The grey face almost makes Van Gogh look ill, but part of it may be due to fading of Kopp's purpurin, the organic red pigment.[5] The painting was placed up against another *carton* support while it was still wet, parts of which transferred to the paint surface as spots of *carton* and colour. The many fingerprints in the wet paint along the edges of the very thin support also show that Van Gogh did not treat his portrait all that carefully.

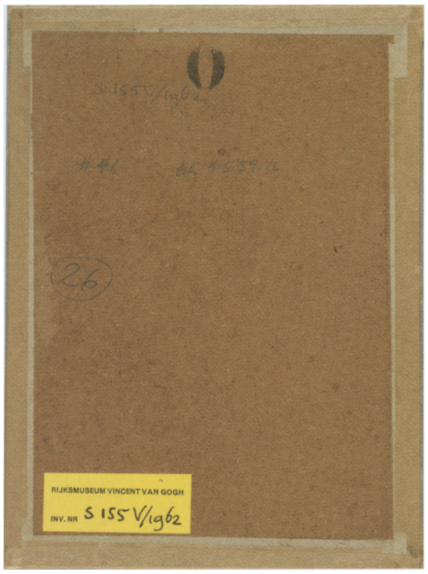
1 For a list of his self-portraits see cats. 74, 75, note 2.
2 Cats. 74-77 are on reused canvases. The works outside the Van Gogh Museum have not been examined for this catalogue, so the information about the supports taken from the 1970 oeuvre catalogue may be incorrect.
3 The authenticity of F 365v JH 1354 (fig. 116f) and F 268 JH 1299 (fig. 116g) has been doubted (see Appendix 2), but see cats. 116-20, note 2.
4 On the back of that work is a stamp of the supplier G. Hennequin, whose shop was at 11 avenue de Clichy; see Otterlo 2003, p. 171.
5 Van Gogh certainly used Kopp's purpurin in the background, as demonstrated by the bright orange fluorescence of the purple pigment particles in a paint cross-section under ultraviolet light, and by the fact that they contain aluminium from the substrate. It is very conceivable that this pigment was also used in the face, but it would have faded there because it was mixed with a great deal of white. It is well preserved in the background.



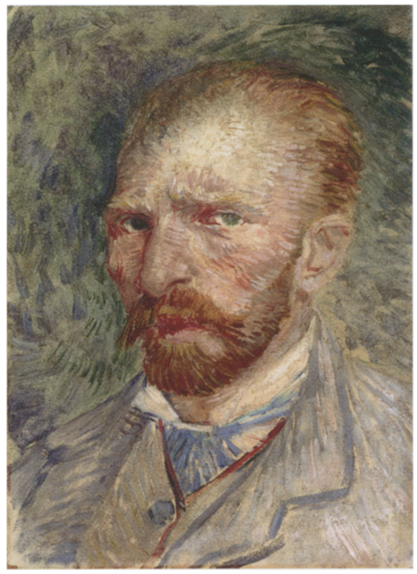
97 Self-portrait



98 Self-portrait



97a Reverse of cat. 97.



97b *Self-portrait* (F 380 JH 1225), 1887. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.



97c *Self-portrait* (F 345 JH 1249), 1887. Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago.

It is difficult to date the painting, but because of their small size it and the one in Otterlo (fig. 97b) are placed in the spring of 1887, when Van Gogh really began immersing himself in the self-portrait genre. He painted four of them in the large *figure* 6 size (41 x 33 cm), including the second work discussed in this entry (cats. 98, 125, figs. 97c, 97d). Their style is related to that of the Neo-Impressionists, which is why the group is dated to this period. Van Gogh used short, rough strokes, apart from in the faces, which are modelled with more delicate and slightly longer strokes. The face in cat. 98, in particular, is meticulously rendered with fine brushes, which were also used to depict the beard and the hair. These delicate, graphic strokes are typical of Van Gogh's works from the spring of 1887.

Cat. 98 has a light grey ground, like the small portrait (cat. 97), and was carefully prepared. Several thin lines of an underdrawing can be seen with the naked eye, and are fully apparent in the infrared. They belong to an assured sketch that indicates the contours of the face while omitting the mouth, ear, beard and clothing. Van Gogh's right eye, as seen in the portrait, is particularly detailed, right down to the shadow. Examination of the paint surface under a microscope reveals that the underdrawing was probably made with graphite. It was followed faithfully in the paint.

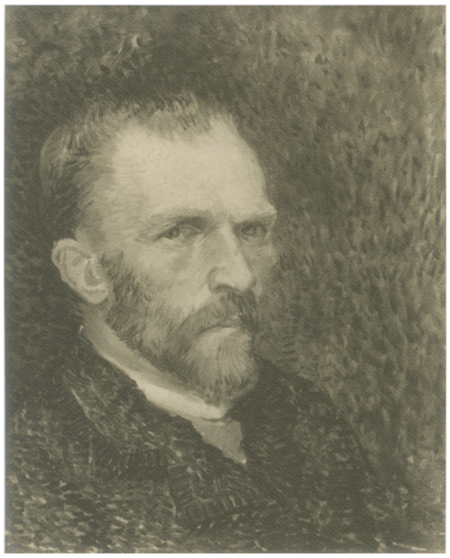
Van Gogh has depicted himself in a brown jacket with a blue trim, as he did in the two other self-portraits on *figure* 6 *carton* supports (figs. 97c, 97d).[6] In the one in this painting he first indicated the contours with lines of blue paint, probably because of the lack of an underdrawing. He later painted his right collar a little higher up and made his left shoulder wider so that his body is turned more towards the viewer. The jacket was worked up directly on the light preparatory layer of the *carton* with loose strokes and stippling in the two complementary colour pairs of dark green with wine red and orange with blue, which merge into a lively brown when seen from a distance. There are a few distinct scratches by the collar, and although Van Gogh occasionally made deliberate incisions in the wet paint in other works, these appear to be accidental.

This painting has faded dramatically, as has his later self-portrait with a straw hat (cat. 125). For the background Van Gogh applied a transparent purple underlayer consisting of cochineal on a tin substrate mixed with some blue. Today there is



97d *Self-portrait* (F 295 JH 1211), 1887. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

6 He later wore this jacket in Arles, as can be seen in his *Self-portrait as a bonze* (F 476 JH 1581).



97e Photograph of cat. 98 by Eugène Druet, c. 1908. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



97f Detail of a photograph of the exhibition held in Antwerp in 1914. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



97g Peter Pollack, Vincent Willem van Gogh in his house in Laren, 1949. Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago, Archives.

almost nothing to be seen of that cochineal, which was originally a deep dark red and became one of his favourite colours in the spring of 1887. As a result, the paint layer has become almost transparent. Only the blue is left, and it merely tinges the lightly primed *carton*. A few dark, brown-purple areas under the frame give an idea of the original tone of the glaze, although their brownish hue must also be the result of discolouration.

Just how drastically the appearance of the painting has changed can be gauged from a black-and-white photograph of around 1908, which clearly shows that the background still had a deep tone at the time (fig. 97e). In 1928 the background was described as 'brown-violet', so the discolouration had already begun.[7] Van Gogh placed loose blue and green dabs on the purple glaze of the background, which began to bead up locally on the oily layer. The disappearance of the dark underlayer left the touches to hover around the head, as it were, giving the work a markedly 'impressionistic' look. Organic red was also used in the face and the jacket but seems to have retained its colour fairly well. The distinctive bright orange fluorescence of these passages under ultraviolet light shows that Van Gogh used Kopp's purpurin, which fades less quickly than cochineal on a tin substrate.

The painting originally had a flat black frame, as can be seen from a document and a photograph of 1914 (fig. 97f).[8] It was later replaced with a broad white frame (fig. 97g).

7 De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 100, no. 356: 'Fond brun violet', to which he added 'flecked with deep green' ('tacheté de vert foncé').
8 The frame is known to have been black from a document written by Jo van Gogh-Bonger (b 2201).

Cat. 97

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 78, vol. 2, pl. LXXIV; De la Faille 1939, p. 302, no. 418; Bromig-Kolleritz 1954, pp. 44, 99, 100; Hammacher 1960, pp. 10, 12; Erpel 1964, p. 57, no. 17; De la Faille 1970, pp. 134, 622; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 225; Hulsker 1977, pp. 262, 264, 271, 272; Hulsker 1980, pp. 262, 270-72; Amsterdam 1987, p. 333, no. 1.160; Hulsker 1996, pp. 262, 270-72; Dorn 2005, p. 21; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 73, note 33; Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 39.

Exhibitions
1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1949-50 New York & Chicago, no. 47; 1951 Albi, no. 331; 1953 The Hague, no. 68; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 57; 1955 Antwerp, no. 202; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 110; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 28; 1960 London, no. 13; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 29; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 29; 1963 Sheffield, no. 6; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 25; 1971-72 Paris, no. 26; 1994 Amsterdam, no cat.; 1995 Hamburg, unnumbered; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 40.

Cat. 98

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Briefe 1906, ill. facing title page; Munich 1909, cover ill.; Druet 1920, no. 20101; Meier-Graefe 1921, ill. 15; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 100, vol. 2, pl. XCIX; De la Faille 1939, p. 298, no. 412; Bromig-Kolleritz 1954, pp. 47, 100, 101; Erpel 1964, p. 57, no. 19; De la Faille 1970, pp. 168, 625; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 125, note 51, 225; Hulsker 1977, pp. 264, 278, 279; Hulsker 1980, pp. 262, 278, 279; Amsterdam 1987, p. 333, no. 1.159; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 90; Essen/Amsterdam 1990-91, pp. 87, 88, no. 14; Hamburg 1995, pp. 114, 115; Tokyo 1995, pp. 50, 51, 120, no. 1; Hulsker 1996, pp. 262, 277-79; Shackelford 2000, pp. 104, 114, ill. 95; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 118, 123-25; Dorn 2005, pp. 15, 16; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 41, 292, 306.

Exhibitions
1893 Copenhagen, no. 173? (not for sale); 1903 Wiesbaden, no. 20? [not for sale]; 1905 Amsterdam I, no. 45 [not for sale]; 1905 Hamburg, no. 47 [not for sale]; 1905 Dresden, no. 43; 1905 Berlin II, no cat.; 1906 Vienna, no. 32 (not for sale); 1908 Munich, no. 4 (not for sale); 1908 Dresden, no. 5 [not for sale]; 1908 Frankfurt am Main, no. 8 (not for sale); 1908 The Hague & Amsterdam, no cat. known, no. 24; 1908 Berlin II, no cat. known [not for sale]; 1909-10 Munich, no. 3, Frankfurt am Main, Dresden & Chemnitz, no cat. known [not for sale]; 1910 Leiden, no cat. known; 1911 Amsterdam, no. 9 [not for sale]; 1911-12 Hamburg, no cat. known [not for sale]; 1911-12 Bremen, no cat.; 1912 Dresden & Breslau, no. 1 (not for sale); 1914 Antwerp, no. 68; 1914 Berlin, no. 35; 1914 Cologne & Hamburg, no cat. known; 1920 New York, no. 64 [not for sale]; 1926-27 London, no. 5 [not for sale]; 1928 Berlin, no. 31; 1928 Frankfurt am Main, no. 20; 1928 Vienna, no. 19? [possibly F 345 JH 1249 or cat. 130]; 1928-29 Hanover, Munich & Leipzig, no cat., no. 15, no cat. known; 1929 Utrecht, no. 21? [not for sale]; 1930 Amersfoort, no cat. known?; 1930 Amsterdam, no. 30; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 30; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 98; 1953 The Hague, no. 86; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 63; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 60; 1954 Zürich, no. 24; 1954-55 Bern, no. 33; 1955 Antwerp, no. 201; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 109; 1956 Leeuwarden, no. 18; 1957 Marseille, no. 35; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 27; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 26; 1960 London, no. 11; 1960 Paris II, no. 47?; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 37; 1968-69 London, no. 94; 1976-77 Tokyo, Kyoto & Nagoya, no. 43; 1990-91 Essen & Amsterdam, nos. 14 and 12 respectively; 1994 Amsterdam, no cat.; 1995 Hamburg, unnumbered; 1995 Tokyo, no. 1; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2000-01 Detroit, Boston & Philadelphia, unnumbered; 2002-03 Treviso, no. 150; 2006-07 Amsterdam & New York, unnumbered [only Amsterdam]; 2007 Williamstown, no cat.; 2007-08 New York, ex catalogue; 2010-11 Tokyo, Fukuoka & Nagoya, no. 78.

99
Skull

100
Skull

99
Paris, first half of May 1887
Oil on canvas
40.4-40.7 x 30.3-30.5 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 128 V/1962
F 297a JH 1347

Underlying image: study of a peasant woman
November 1884-May 1885

100
Paris, first half of May 1887
Oil on canvas
41.6-42.4 x 30.0-30.4 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 123 V/1962
F 297 JH 1346

Underlying image: study of a head
November 1884-May 1885

These two paintings are of the same skull. One shows it frontally (cat. 99) the other from the side (cat. 100), with a vague suggestion that it is lying on a cloth. These paintings have little in common with Van Gogh's *Head of a skeleton with a burning cigarette* (cat. 50) of early 1886. That work was intended as a joke but it has often been thought that there were more serious intentions behind these two. One theory is that Van Gogh gave the skull 'a strangely lifelike grimace' in order to contrast life with death.[1] Skulls always grimace, though, and it is very much the question whether any meaning should be read into that expression at all.

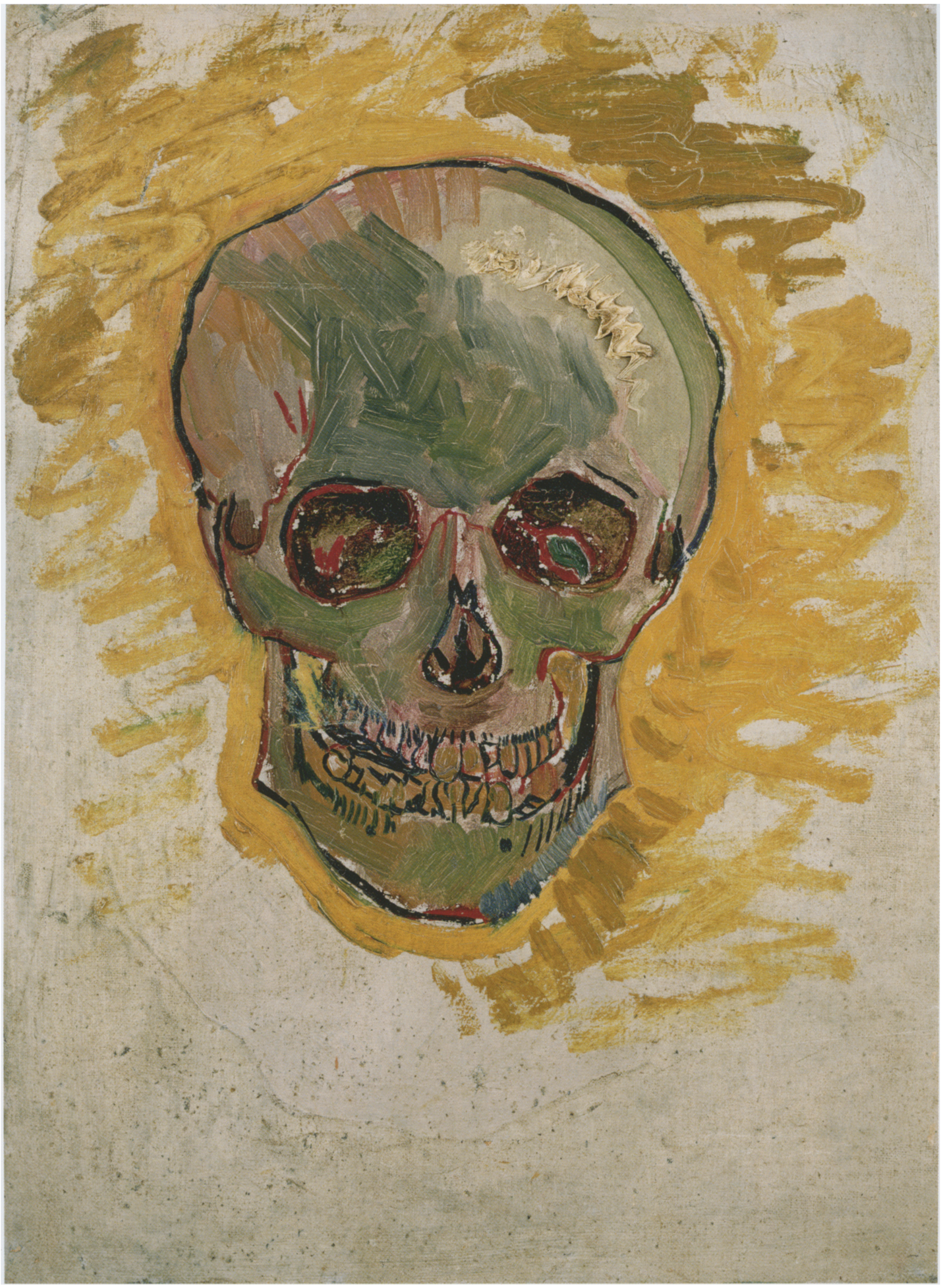
Van Gogh, like us, would immediately have been reminded of the fleeting nature of life when confronted with a skull, but it is doubtful if that was why he chose it as a subject. He probably just wanted to experiment with colour and form, as he did in his other still lifes. He had a blaze of colour to work with in his flower pieces, but this is a monochrome subject, which puts these paintings in the same category as his studies of shoes (see cats. 73, 78). The subject restricted him to a limited palette, and the question he would have asked himself as a painter was how he could use it as colourfully as possible without losing credibility.

Both skulls are on canvases that almost match the standard, *haute paysage* 6 size (40.4 x 29.7 cm) (Table 3.4, nos. 24, 23).[2] They have identical double grounds: a layer of chalk containing a little lead white followed by a layer of lead white with a little chalk and zinc white. The two canvases have different weaves, though, so did not come from the same bolt of cloth.[3] They both lack tacking edges and cusping, from which it can be deduced that Van Gogh cut them to the standard size himself.

The two subjects are painted over earlier scenes that were first covered with a cool, whitish layer of paint that was made up as a single batch consisting of a specific mixture of lead white, barium sulphate, zinc white with silicates, and bone white (calcium phosphate), a highly unusual white pigment (p. 107, fig. 17). That layer was not yet completely dry when the skulls were painted (probably because of the zinc white, which dries very slowly), with the result that there are severe drying cracks in both scenes.

Little of the underlying images can be made out in the X-radiographs, but raking light reveals a few thick brushstrokes suggestive of a head that protrudes into the picture surface. This is most obvious in cat. 99, which when turned upside down reveals the profile of a female head with an impasto blob for her nostril. It can be seen in areas of paint loss and drying cracks that a lot of dark blue was used for the image underneath cat. 99, as well as pale blue, green, brown and pink. Analyses of

1 Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 198.
2 See cat. 101, note 20, for the use of standard sizes in the Nuenen period.
3 In the X-rays it is very hard to make out the individual threads in one direction, since a lead white paint was later combed on in the same direction with a serrated spatula in order to stick the canvases onto plywood supports. However, the hand thread counts obtained were verified by automated methods, providing reliable counts for both pictures.



99 Skull



100 Skull

paint samples revealed that the pigments are Prussian blue, ochre, umber, Naples yellow and fine black, which are characteristic of Van Gogh's works from Nuenen and the start of his time in Antwerp. He used none of them, apart from Prussian blue, after the summer of 1886.[4]

An interesting comparison can be made with *Square Saint-Pierre at sunset* (cat. 101) and *Self-portrait with pipe and straw hat* (cat. 129), both of which have the same grounds as the skull paintings and are also on top of Nuenen heads hidden behind exactly the same covering layer. The same dark pigments were also used for the underlying images, and once again there are no tacking edges or cusping. Moreover, automated thread counting techniques have identified a weave match between *Skull* (cat. 99) and *Square Saint-Pierre at sunset* (cat. 101), confirming that the two pieces of canvas were cut in weft alignment from the same roll, whereas *Self-portrait with pipe and straw hat* (cat. 129) was found to be on canvas of matching thread density.[5]

The two still lifes have hitherto been dated to the end of 1887, but that is incorrect.[6] The arbitrary, coarse brushwork for the background of the skull seen from the side (cat. 100) is very similar to that in the foreground of *By the Seine* (cat. 107), while the use of slightly intertwined, partly overlapping brushstrokes is also found in *Square Saint-Pierre at sunset* (cat. 101). That painting was made in the first half of May 1887, and that is the date that is now being given to these two still lifes of skulls. It is also suggested by the reuse of old, failed canvases from Nuenen, for thanks to Tanguy's generosity Van Gogh had 'lots of canvases' [571] when he started going to Asnières on painting expeditions later that month (on which see cat. 106).

4 On this see pp. 142, 143. Small amounts of ochre were also found in Van Gogh's later palette, but they were probably added to the tube colours by the manufacturer.
5 Given the matching average and distribution of thread count values for *Self-portrait with pipe and straw hat* (cat. 129), it is possible that this canvas, too, was cut from the same roll, though not in overlap with cat. 99 or cat. 101. Information from unpublished weave match report, Johnson, Johnson and Erdmann 2010.
6 De la Faille 1970, p. 148, dated them to 1887, but without giving any reasons. Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 231, thought of the late summer or autumn, but then changed her mind in Paris 1988, p. 172, no. 67. She agreed with Hulsker, who placed them in the winter of 1887-88 (Hulsker 1977, pp. 300, 303, and Hulsker 1996, p. 303). He thought that F 216 JH 1348 was also made then, and that indeed seems likely.

Cat. 99

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 85, vol. 2, pl. LXXXI [as 297bis]; De la Faille 1939, p. 292, no. 403 [F 297bis]; Tralbaut 1948, pp. 228-30; De la Faille 1970, pp. 148, 149, 623; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 198, 231; Hulsker 1977, pp. 300, 303; Hulsker 1980, pp. 300, 303; Amsterdam 1987, p. 337, no. 1.184; Paris 1988, pp. 172, 173, no. 67; Van Lindert/Van Uitert 1990, p. 124; Hulsker 1996, pp. 288, 300, 302, 303; Shackelford 2000, p. 114, ill. 101; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 50, 51, 53, 66.

EXHIBITIONS
1988 Paris, no. 67; 2000-01 Detroit, Boston & Philadelphia, unnumbered; 2003 Amsterdam II, unnumbered.

Cat. 100

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 85, vol. 2, pl. LXXXI; De la Faille 1939, p. 292, no. 402; Tralbaut 1948, pp. 228-30; De la Faille 1970, pp. 148, 149, 623; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 198, 231; Hulsker 1977, pp. 300, 303; Hulsker 1980, pp. 300, 303; Amsterdam 1987, p. 337, no. 1.183; Welsh-Ovcharov 1987, p. 56; Van Lindert/Van Uitert 1990, p. 124; Hulsker 1996, pp. 288, 300, 302, 303; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 53, 66.

EXHIBITIONS
1948-49 The Hague, no. 76; 2003 Riehen, unnumbered.

101
Square Saint-Pierre at sunset

Paris, first half of May 1887
Oil on canvas on *carton*
32.8 x 42.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 98 V/1962
F 275 JH 1278

Underlying image: study of a peasant woman (fig. 101g)
November 1884-May 1885

In the spring of 1887 Van Gogh painted five scenes of parks or gardens which Pierre Leprohon suspected were made in the same location: the Voyer d'Argenson park in Asnières.[1] Although that identification of 1964 was not based on any firm evidence, it has been accepted ever since, and the editors of the 1970 edition of De la Faille's oeuvre catalogue actually added a sixth depiction of that park: this painting.[2]

There are problems, though, with that location. It cannot be deduced from the six scenes themselves that they are of one and the same park or garden. In fact, they fall into three categories. Three are indeed of the same setting: cat. 101, fig. 101a and fig. 101b (cat. 104). It is a modern, fairly new park, as shown by the small paths with low fences, young horse chestnuts and well-maintained flowerbeds. Two are of another, much older garden in which the trees are of a respectable age and the paths are wider (fig. 101c).[3] The sixth painting, finally, shows another location altogether, but it is demonstrably not the Voyer d'Argenson park.[4]

That leaves us with the question of whether the two other groups really are of the park in Asnières, which dated from the 18th century and belonged to the castle that Madame de Pompadour's brother, Marquis Marc-René de Voyer d'Argenson, built near the riverside village in 1749.[5] The park was opened to the public in the first half of the 19th century but in 1885 it was divided up and sold off in lots. One of them was bought by Vital Pouget, who built a house on it that was completed in 1889. The new garden laid out around his 'château' incorporated trees from the old park and became the forerunner of the present-day Voyer d'Argenson park.[6]

Pouget's garden, which is now on the quai du Docteur Derveaux, was private property, so it is unlikely that Van Gogh depicted it.[7] However, it is very conceivable that the two views with older, denser trees were painted in the old, 18th-century park (fig. 101c).[8] It is very much the question whether the three paintings with the young horse chestnuts (cat. 101, figs. 101a, 101b) are views elsewhere in the same park, as has been implicitly assumed up until now. The original castle was a ruin in the 1880s, which does not suggest that the authorities were actively trying to renovate parts of the old park, let alone maintain the flowerbeds in immaculate condition.[9] Nor did the authors of travel guides consider the park worth mentioning, all of which suggests that the well-cultivated, modern garden should be sought not in Asnières but in Paris.[10]

1 Leprohon 1964, p. 414, and Leprohon 1972, p. 253. They are cat. 104 (fig. 101b), F 276 JH 1259 (fig. 101a), F 277 JH 1316 (fig. 101c), F 305 JH 1265 and F 315 JH 1320. The assumption that they are of a park in Asnières would be based on the titles given to cat. 104 and F 315 JH 1320 in De la Faille's oeuvre catalogue of 1928. He did not identify the location in the other three paintings so specifically. Cat. 104 had had a neutral title in the earliest exhibition catalogues, but starting with Berlin 1914 (no. 61) it was described as a park in Asnières, apart from in Amsterdam 1926, where it was 'Park (Paris)' (no. 34).
2 De la Faille 1970, p. 138, followed by Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 233, 234, and Pickvance 1988, pp. 95, 103. The suggestion that the location was the Voyer d'Argenson park did not always lead to a modification of the old title (as in Amsterdam 1987, p. 332, and Hulsker 1996, p. 285).
3 The other work is F 305 JH 1265, which shows the entrance to a garden.
4 It is F 315 JH 1320, with the Pont de Clichy in the left background, which identifies the site as a garden on the Île des Ravageurs.
5 The history of Château Pouget is traced by Robert Dubois in 'Souvenirs du Château Pouget', *Gazette du Château*, II, 5, 1982, pp. 10-13, and II, 6, 1982, pp. 8-10.
6 The municipality of Asnières bought that site in 1926 and opened the park to the public six years later, when the garden was given its present name.
7 Insufficient distinction has been made in the literature between this surviving garden and the old 18th-century park. Leprohon 1964, p. 414, first spoke of a small garden, evidently referring to Pouget's park, but in his later book, Leprohon 1972, p. 353, no distinction is made between the new, fenced-off park and the old garden. That confusion was perpetuated in Paris 1988, p. 104, no. 33, and in Thomson 2002, p. 55.
8 The other one is F 305 JH 1265, which probably shows the entrance to the same garden.
9 Barron 1886, p. 40.
10 For a list of the gardens in Asnières see Baedeker 1889, p. 274. Another argument is that the largest painting (fig. 101b) would have been far too awkward to transport over long distances, so must have been painted closer to Van Gogh's home and not as far away as Asnières.



101 Square Saint-Pierre at sunset



101a *Square Saint-Pierre* (F 276 JH 1259), 1887. New Haven, Yale University Art Gallery.



101b *Garden with courting couples: square Saint-Pierre* (cat. 104).

That also fits in with the original title of the largest of the three paintings (fig. 101b), which is described in the 1890 inventory of Theo's collection as a 'Petit jardin à Montmartre' ('Little garden in Montmartre').[11] The fact that the compiler of the inventory, Theo's brother-in-law Andries Bonger, used the word 'little' shows that he recognised the spot.[12] Although there were many parks and gardens in Montmartre at the time, it turns out that the location is easily traceable today. It is the

11 Van Gogh made three very large paintings in Paris: cats. 104 and 115, and F 350 JH 1245 (now in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, fig. 115a). The first is a view in a park, the other two are of allotments in Montmartre. Their remarkably large sizes make all three clearly identifiable in the 1890 inventory of Theo's collection (Bonger 1890). They are listed under nos. 90 ('Petit jardin à Montmartre [40]'), 91 ('Vue de Montmartre [40]') and 310 ('Montmartre [50]'), and since neither cat. 115 nor the work in the Stedelijk Museum (fig. 115a) could be described as a 'petit jardin', the park scene with courting couples is no. 90 in the inventory.
The other inventory numbers can then be identified by their standard sizes. No. 91 can only be the work in the Van Gogh Museum (cat. 115) and no. 310 the slightly larger painting in the Stedelijk Museum (fig. 115a). No. 310 is also mentioned in a list of paintings drawn up in 1891, where it is given the title 'Montmartre (Moulin de la Galette)' (b 1449), which again matches the painting in the Stedelijk Museum, where the Moulin de la Galette can be seen, albeit way off in the background. There is a different identification in Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 286, 292, but he assumed that the title of no. 90 in Bonger's inventory meant that it could not be cat. 104, which was still regarded as a landscape painted in Asnières at the time (kind communication from Walter Feilchenfeldt).

12 The only surprising thing is that Bonger described fig. 101a (F 276 JH 1259) as 'Jardin (effet de soleil) (25)' (Bonger 1890, no. 83), that is to say without adding the word 'petit', so we have no way of knowing whether he realised that it was the same garden as in cat. 104. As far as can be made out at present, cat. 101 is not listed in Bonger's inventory. It was suggested in *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin*, April 1959, p. 28, that F 276 JH 1259 (fig. 101a) was a view in Park Montsouris, which was laid out in 1878, although no supporting arguments were given. That park is on the other side of the city from Montmartre, and there is no evidence that Van Gogh ever painted there.

101c *Garden in Asnières* (F 277 JH 1316), 1887. Private collection.



public garden laid out on square Saint-Pierre, to the south of the Sacré-Coeur, which was under construction at the time. This small park, which features in many photographs taken by Louis Durandelle as part of the building activities around the new church (fig. 101d), consisted of 'sandy soil planted with chestnut trees, half park with steep footpaths and grassy slopes', which matches what can be seen in the three paintings.[13]

Signac painted a view of the eastern part of the garden in the winter of 1883-84 (fig. 101e), but Van Gogh's three paintings are of the western part. All three are painted from roughly the same spot, close to the northernmost flowerbed (fig. 101f), looking southwest. The scene in the small study (cat. 101) is identical to the left side of the Pointillist painting (fig. 101a). The slightly wider field of view in the latter work brings the houses at 4-6 rue Taurdieu into sight in the background. We are looking at the broad side of the block and part of the back, which was on the north side.[14] The centre section of that canvas is depicted in the largest painting (fig. 101b), which is far more stylised and abstract than the other two, as can be seen above all from the arabesque shapes of the paths in the foreground, which were not painted from life (see cat. 104).[15]

The sequence in which the paintings were made can be deduced from their sizes. This, the smallest of the three, would have been Van Gogh's first exploration of this part of the garden.[16] A loose, swiftly executed impression, it was followed by the detailed Pointillist painting (fig. 101a; 59 x 81 cm), for which he stood a little further back and included not only the flowerbed but also neighbouring buildings. He then made the largest of the three pictures in a slightly less polished Neo-Impressionist style (fig. 101b; 75.0 x 112.7 cm), in which he followed his first impression by concentrating mainly on the flowerbeds and the paths winding past the bushes. The chestnut trees are now in blossom, so this painting would date from around the middle of May,[17] while the other two, in which there is no blossom on the trees, were made shortly before.

There are figures in all three works. Three can be vaguely made out in the first

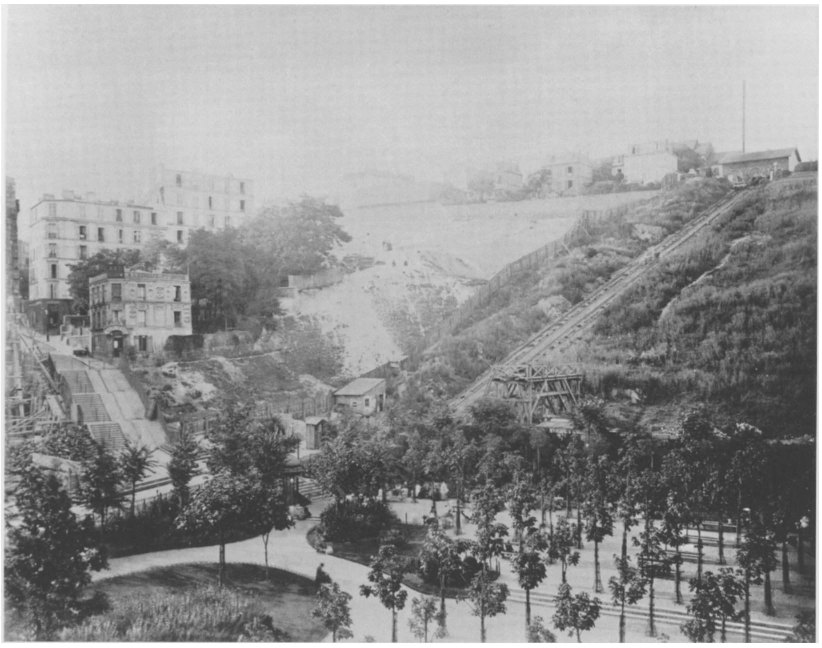
13 Hénard 1911, p. 171: 'terrain sablé, planté de marronniers, mi-parc aux sentiers abrupts, aux déclivités gazonnées'; see also p. 170.

14 Alterations were subsequently made to square Saint-Pierre and the buildings on its western and southern sides, so a photograph of the present situation would be of little help in clarifying the topography. The side of the block at 4-6 rue Tardieu is still recognisable, although it too has not survived unscathed, for the side of it has been partly demolished.

15 The purplish ground around the flowerbed in the Pointillist painting (fig. 101a) is also a little difficult to understand. It cannot be shadows, but perhaps earth has been dug up here. Nor is it possible to explain the paving stones in front of the fence on the left, if indeed they are paving stones.

16 Until now it has merely been suspected that cat. 101 was a preliminary study for fig. 101a. Cat. 104 (fig. 101b), the large painting, was thought to depict another part of the park; see Pickvance 1988, p. 95, and Amsterdam 1988, p. 103.

17 The first horse chestnuts to flower in the Paris region in 1887 did so on 11 May (Relevés Météorologiques, Parc de Saint-Maur, May 1887, Paris, Météo-France), so we know that this painting was made around the middle of the month. Chestnuts blossom for around a fortnight.



101d Louis Durandelle, *Square Saint-Pierre*, 1881-90. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale.



101e Paul Signac, *Square Saint-Pierre*, 1883-84. Basel, Kunstmuseum Basel, gift of Dr Hans Graber, 1947.



101f Plan of square Saint-Pierre, detail from the land registry map, 1886. Paris, Archives Municipales de Paris.

study, there is a woman in the middleground of the Pointillist work who was only added at a fairly late stage, and there are three courting couples in the final, very ambitious picture. Van Gogh referred to the last one in 1888 as 'garden with lovers' [592], and it very much looks as if he deliberately worked towards it. The two smaller paintings should be regarded as preliminary studies in which he examined the setting more closely.[18]

The Amsterdam picture differs from the other two in that it shows the garden at sunset, so we are looking towards the southwest. The warm yellow glow in the sky above the horizon contrasts with the cool blue in the trees and the path in the

18 It has always been thought that no preliminary work was done for this large painting; see Ronald Pickvance in Amsterdam 1988, p. 103. Since it was not realised that it depicted the same spot, it was thought that the two smaller works were just general views of the garden.

foreground, which announces the impending nightfall, as it were. Van Gogh first defined the fairly simple composition in an underdrawing, probably so that he could capture the fleeting colour and light effects of twilight as faithfully as possible. That first design, which shows up clearly in the infrared, was drawn freehand, seemingly with graphite. The lines indicate the different parts of the composition schematically, with rather sinuous hatchings to suggest shaded passages.

Working from this sketch, Van Gogh painted the scene in one rapid session, placing the different colours directly on top of one another. The white base layer was used to the full. It can be seen between individual brushstrokes and added luminosity to the thin paints, particularly in the foreground. The palette is limited, as it is in the other *plein-air* studies from this period, and consists mainly of dark and light blue, green, yellow ochre, light yellow and scattered organic red. These colours are found throughout the painting, which suggests that they were used straight from the tube, i.e. unmixed, as Van Gogh generally did in his rapid outdoor studies. The red paint for the head of the figure on the right even seems to have been squeezed out of the tube onto the canvas.

The brushwork is varied and 'descriptive', as it is in the other landscapes of the period. The foliage consists mainly of short, fairly impasted strokes. The sky and the path were painted with long strokes, and Van Gogh applied so much force to the brush in the path that the paint was pushed to the sides, revealing the colour of the base layer in the middle of the strokes. He pushed the blue and green paint aside in much the same way in the tree on the right, exposing the underlying pale yellow to suggest the effect of the late afternoon sunlight playing through the leaves.

The scene was painted on top of a study of a peasant woman from the Nuenen period.[19] This is based on several pieces of evidence. The size of the canvas, 32.8 x 42.0 cm, is similar to that of the Nuenen studies of heads, allowing for the fact that they are vertical, not horizontal (Table 3.4, no. 21).[20] The X-radiograph (fig. 101g) reveals round, curved shapes at top and bottom centre which closely resemble the brushstrokes with which Van Gogh painted the bottoms of the large white caps worn by the peasant women (fig. 101h). The two bold, angular strokes (fig. 101g) indicate a narrow white collar of the type often worn by those women, while the smaller zigzags would have been used for the finer folds in the top of the cap.[21] In addition, examination of the paint surface under raking light shows that the curved shapes were made with fairly impasted paint, and that matches the caps in the Nuenen studies. Paint samples taken at the edges demonstrate that part of the first composition consisted of a dark, medium-rich almost black layer of paint, and that also fits in well with a Nuenen portrait, because all of those figures wear dark clothing and the background is a pronounced earth colour, if not black. The pigments used, which include ochre, lead white, Naples yellow, black, umber and Prussian blue, are also typical of Van Gogh's Nuenen works (although also of his early output in Antwerp), and with the exception of Prussian blue and lead white he virtually banished them from his palette at the end of his first summer in Paris.

The X-radiograph also shows that there were holes in the corners of the canvas and, apparently, along the present frayed top edge.[22] This is odd, but explicable. In Nuenen Van Gogh cut his canvases from a ready-prepared bolt without rigidly adhering to any standard sizes.[23] He then nailed them to a plank or stretcher,

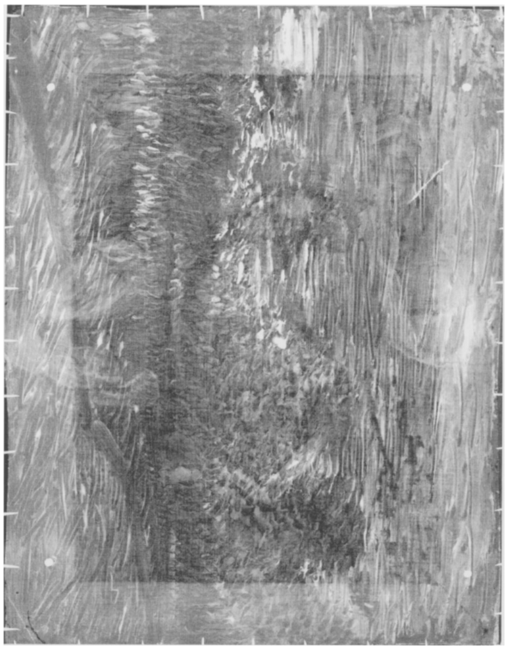
19 It was pointed out that there was an underlying image as early as Van de Wetering/Blauwhoff 1985.

20 Portraits of peasant women from Nuenen wearing caps in the collections of the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam and the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo have the following sizes: F 80a JH 682, 42.2 x 34.8 cm; F 85 JH 693, 44 x 35.9 cm; F 130 JH 692, 42.7 x 33.5 cm; F 156 JH 569, 42 x 33.3 cm.

21 The strokes for the collar and cap are similarly light in the X-radiograph, showing that Van Gogh used lead white or zinc white, or both, as he did in the Nuenen studies of women's heads.

22 Unfortunately, those holes were filled and retouched during later conservation work, making it impossible to identify the stage in the painting process when they were made.

23 As a result, the tacking edges and cusping are missing from many of his Nuenen canvases. Van Gogh only started using standard canvas sizes when he arrived in Antwerp, and he bought them ready primed and stretched. As it happens, the canvas of *Square Saint-Pierre at sunset* is very close to a standard size, *figure* 6 (41 x 33 cm), but that does not rule out a Nuenen origin. The fact that he did not buy ready-made canvases of a standard size in that period does not mean that he did not cut them to loosely fit those sizes himself, for there are several studies of the heads of peasant women with similar dimensions (see note 20 above).



101g X-radiograph of cat. 101; rotated 45° to the right to show the underlying image.



101h *Head of a woman (Gordina de Groot)* (F 130 JH 692), 1885. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

without folding the edges over the sides of those supports, and that is what he must have done here as well.[24]

The canvas has a double ground consisting of a layer of chalk with a little lead white topped by a layer of lead white with a little chalk and zinc white. It was discovered while studying Van Gogh's Antwerp paintings that this priming structure is on canvases that he bought there (cats. 46, 50) as well as on others that had been sent on from Nuenen (cats. 45, 49) (Table 3.4).[25] It has also been found on 6 of the 67 Paris works researched for this catalogue (cats. 99-101, 108, 129, 134), but 4 of those were reused canvases. In addition to this view of the public garden they are a self-portrait (cat. 129) and the two still lifes with skulls (cats. 99, 100), all of which seem to be on top of paintings made in Nuenen. All the X-radiographs and photographs taken in raking light of the self-portrait and the skulls suggest that the underlying images are heads (cats. 99, 100, 129). They could have been portrait studies made in Antwerp, but the sum total of the technical data point to an origin in Nuenen.

As is the case with the scene under this view of a public garden, the underlying images were made with very dark mixtures of paints containing similar pigments, and coupled with the identical double ground this all points to an early provenance. In addition, the canvas of the self-portrait (cat. 129) has the same thread density as that of *Skull* (cat. 99) and *Square Saint-Pierre at sunset* (cat. 101), and a weave match confirms that the latter were cut in weft alignment from the same bolt of primed canvas.[26] The conclusion that the canvases are of Nuenen provenance is supported by the recent discovery of a weave match between *Square Saint-Pierre at sunset* with a Nuenen study, *Head of a woman*, proving that they were cut from the same roll.[27]

One of the underlying studies of heads could very well be the painting in the background of the *Portrait of Alexander Reid* from early 1887 (fig. 101i). That scene is set in Theo's apartment, and in between two paintings by Frank Myers Boggs is the head of a peasant woman by Van Gogh. It is a profile portrait, and cannot be associated with any of the surviving studies of heads, so there is a very good chance that it

24 The fact that a strikingly large number of the Nuenen works have nail holes along the edges was reported in Van Tilborgh 1999 II, pp. 21, 22.
25 Ongoing analytical studies of the grounds found on Van Gogh's Nuenen period paintings undertaken at the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE) has revealed this particular type of double ground more often, under F 41 JH 513, F 44 JH 962, F 61r JH 533, F 69 JH 724, F 74 JH 648, F 83 JH 777, F 107 JH 933, F 122 JH 522, F 147 JH 891 and F 160 JH 722, among others.
26 They do not seem to have been adjacent in the bolt, for nowhere do their edges match. The report on the weave map is given in cats. 99, 100, note 5.
27 F 70a JH 716; see Paintings 1, cat. 22. Unpublished weave match report Johnson, Johnson and Erdmann 2010. The ground layer of this work has not yet been analysed to see if it compares.



101i *Portrait of Alexander Reid* (F 270 JH 1207), 1887. Norman, Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art, The University of Oklahoma.

is one of the works that was reused, although it is not the one underneath cat. 101, because the woman's cap is slightly different.

Van Gogh covered over the Nuenen works in one go with the same paint. The new scenes on top were painted in May 1887 (cats. 99-101), with the exception of the self-portrait (cat. 129), which is dated to September-October of that year, when Van Gogh was short of money (on this see also cats. 100, 101, 106).[28] All the cool, whitish covering layers consist of a specific mixture of lead white, barium sulphate, zinc white and the highly unusual pigment bone white (calcium phosphate). In each case that white intermediate layer was not entirely dry when the second scene was painted on top of it, which would have been due to the slow-drying zinc white. This resulted in pronounced drying cracks, which are very visible in the shrubs beneath the trees in the park scene.

28 There is also the head of a woman from Nuenen under *Patch of grass* of May 1887 (F 583 JH 1263); see Otterlo 2003, p. 170, and Dik *et al.* 2008. The painting is on a finer weave canvas than the works discussed here, with an average of 21.7 vertical and 21.5 horizontal threads per cm listed in the unpublished report of the Thread Count Automation Project, 2010. Neither the original ground nor the covering layer in *Patch of grass* has been analysed for comparative purposes, though the latter is described as greyish white in the report of 2 August 2002 by Ruth Hoppe (Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum, Conservation Department).

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, pp. 80, 81, vol. 2, pl. LXXVI; De la Faille 1939, p. 261, no. 354; De la Faille 1970, pp. 138, 139, 622; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 96, 97, 233; Hulsker 1977, pp. 278, 282, 284, 285; Hulsker 1980, pp. 278, 282, 285; Amsterdam 1987, p. 332, no. 1.154; Pickvance 1988, p. 95; Hulsker 1996, pp. 278, 282, 284, 285; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 53, 66; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 89, 308.

EXHIBITION
1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.

102
Basket of pansies

Paris, first half of May 1887
Oil on canvas
46.0 x 55.0 cm
Signed at lower left in orange-red: Vincent
Inv. s 180 V/1962
F 244 JH 1093

Underlying image: indeterminate
After March 1886

This still life shows flowering pansies in a pointed wickerwork container modelled on a seed basket. It is not standing on a table, the traditional support for flower pieces, but on a low stand or stool, the seat of which is in the shape of a tambourine. It is an unusual support for a flower still life, and when the work was exhibited in 1892 one critic praised Van Gogh's disdain for convention, saying that it was well illustrated by this picture: 'an uprooted pansy plant dumped on the nearest thing that would support it'.[1]

That 'nearest thing' came from the Tambourin café and restaurant that Agostina Segatori had opened in boulevard de Clichy in 1885. The interior was furnished entirely around the theme of tambourines, and this is probably a low table from her establishment. Van Gogh would have painted the work on the spot seated on a chair, which would explain the downward perspective.

Basket of pansies is on a very loosely woven, *figure* 10 canvas (46 x 55 cm) (Table 3.1, no. 1), and was painted on top of another scene which must be an earlier work from the Paris period on the evidence of the type of canvas. It contained Naples yellow, and since Van Gogh no longer used that pigment after the summer of 1886 it must have been made between March and the autumn of that year. He scraped that scene off and painted a thin, blackish covering layer on top, which he left to dry thoroughly before applying two layers of white to serve as the basis for the present flower still life (p. 115, fig. 33).[2] Both those white layers contain the slow-drying zinc white, so there are disturbing shrinkage cracks in the paint surface, most notably in the purple petals, where the red glaze was evidently particularly sensitive to stresses between the paint layers (p. 116, fig. 35). After a while this led to paint losses, which were first documented in 1926: 'in the painting with pansies, for instance, [...] the paint is already flaking off in one section'.[3]

Infrared reflectography has revealed that Van Gogh drew the shape of a standard *figure* 6 perspective frame on the white base layer (41 x 33 cm). It seems that he had four of these frames at the time, and this was the most suitable one, despite being quite a bit smaller than the canvas. It is interesting that he used a frame for a still life, for it is an aid that he otherwise used only for landscapes or street scenes. One thing that this still life had in common with them is that it was not painted in the studio, but it is not clear whether that explains this departure from his usual practice. The frame did offer him a firm anchorage point for the *mise en page* to counteract the 'difficult' angle from which he painted the flowers, looking down on them a little.

Van Gogh used the frame to make a sketch of the scene, probably with graphite, which is partly visible to the naked eye but shows up more clearly in the infrared reflectogram (fig. 102a). The outlines of the petals are free and lively, and a comparison with the timid, almost wooden underdrawing of *Flame nettle in a flowerpot* (cat.

1 W.S., 'Vincent van Gogh (bij Oldenzeel)', *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 17 March 1892: 'een uitgerukte violenplant, neergesmeten op het eerste het beste ding, dat haar dragen wou'.
2 The paint of that second intermediate layer is absolutely identical to that covering Nuenen scenes beneath four works of almost the same date: see cats. 99-101 and 129.
3 Letter from W. Steenhoff to V.W. van Gogh, 10 March 1926 (b 5621): '[...] zoo is op het schilderij met de violen [....] op een gedeelte de verf al bezig af te bladderen'.



102 Basket of pansies

67) of June 1886 shows just how much Van Gogh's manner of underdrawing had advanced in the interim.

The scene was painted wet-into-wet in a single session, with only the signature being added when the rest was dry. The background was filled in first, with a reserve being left for the basket and flowers as planned in the underdrawing. Van Gogh then started on the actual still life, using the same paint as in the background to define the contours. He used buttery paints for the petals and leaves, which he applied very loosely with a broad brush on top of and beside each other, sometimes quite thinly and sometimes with a more loaded brush. Similar strokes are visible in the background, where there are occasional glimpses of a basketwork pattern of the kind that he had previously used in his still lifes of plaster casts and flowers, although there it is far more pronounced (cats. 57-63, 67-71).

Van Gogh liked blue backgrounds for his still lifes. The pale green-blue one in *Basket of pansies* resembles them, but that is not the colour that Van Gogh intended at all. A few years ago, the removal of paper that had been pasted onto the edges during the restoration of 1932 revealed a deep violet which had faded everywhere else in the scene. That paper was only applied some 40 years after the canvas was finished, so even that background colour would have been even brighter originally. The pigment is cochineal on a tin substrate mixed with lead white and some French ultramarine and emerald green. Cochineal on a tin substrate has a bright opaque colour that can range from purple to scarlet but is not at all colour-fast, particularly when mixed with white, as it was here. Van Gogh would have preferred this intense violet because of the contrast with the yellow pansies in the basket.

It was thought for a long time that this was one of Van Gogh's very first Paris still lifes.[4] However, he only got to know Agostina Segatori in the winter of 1886-87, and the unmistakable reference to her café in the shape of the low table shows that the painting would have been made while they were still in a relationship, as Welsh-Ovcharov rightly suggested.[5] The unusual composition and the palette have absolutely nothing in common with the flower still lifes from the summer of 1886. Technical examination has also revealed that the lavish cochineal on a tin substrate has never been found in a Van Gogh painting prior to January 1887, and the loose underdrawing bears not the slightest resemblance to those beneath the works from the beginning of his time in Paris.

Pansies flower from March until deep in the autumn, but if one assumes that the painting was indeed made in Le Tambourin it could only have been executed early in 1887, for we know from two of Van Gogh's letters written in the middle of July that he had not been in touch with Segatori for some time by then, which means that their affair must have been over by late spring.[6] Since the broad, intuitive brushwork does not match the use of highly thinned paint from the first three or four months of 1887, we are left only with May as the rough date of the painting. And indeed, the rapid, fairly varied way in which the background was executed is very similar to the brushwork in two landscapes from that month (cats. 101, 107), while the underdrawing with its loose, almost wild look has much in common with that under *Horse chestnut tree in blossom* from mid-May (cat. 103).

Van Gogh had stopped painting flower still lifes in the autumn of 1886, but three new ones made in the late spring or early summer of 1887 show that he had

4 De la Faille 1970, p. 124; Hulsker 1990, p. 255, note 96, and Hulsker 1996, p. 237, no. 1093.
5 Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 228; oddly enough, her dating was not followed in Hulsker 1996, p. 237, no. 1093.
6 Letters 571 and 572; see also cat. 84.



102a Detail of the infrared reflectogram of cat. 102.

a temporary revival of interest in the genre.[7] Although the perspective of *Basket of pansies* is a little unusual, he would definitely have been hoping to sell the painting. He may even have been thinking of the example of Henri Fantin-Latour, who had built up a large clientele for still lifes with pansies.

It is conceivable that Van Gogh wanted to add this and the other three still lifes to his permanent exhibition in the Tambourin café and restaurant (see cats. 67-69, 84). In any event, Johan Cohen Gosschalk, Jo van Gogh-Bonger's second husband, wrote in 1905 that *Basket of pansies* was part of 'a decoration' that Van Gogh had designed for Segatori's restaurant.[8] The source of that statement was almost certainly Emile Bernard, an acquaintance of Gosschalk's who later wrote that Van Gogh had been given free meals at Le Tambourin in return for several paintings a week, and that in this way he 'ended up covering all the walls of the place with his studies'.[9] According to him, the works on display were 'mostly flowers', from which Cohen Gosschalk evidently drew the conclusion that *Basket of pansies* had been one of the works exhibited there. That is not impossible – the reference to the restaurant in the shape of the low table or stool even seems to suggest that it was made specifically as part of that decoration – but since the painting is now in the family collection it would imply that Segatori had given it back to Van Gogh.

That, though, is contradicted by certain facts. It is known that third parties had seized Van Gogh's paintings in the restaurant in July 1887 because Le Tambourin was on the point of going bankrupt.[10] The affair between Van Gogh and Segatori had ended long before, but he told her in a conversation that 'she had to give *everything* back' [571]. So contrary to what Bernard thought, the paintings had not been payment for meals at all. Van Gogh had evidently decorated the restaurant with still lifes of flowers in the hope of selling them to the customers but without making any firm commitment with Segatori as to the length of the exhibition.[11] She told him

7 Those works are F 322 JH 1292, F 323 JH 1295 and F 213 JH 1247. The last one would have been made in June, for it is of fritillaries, the first two in May-June, because they contain leopard's bane, also known as spring sunflowers. There are probably fritillaries in F 214 JH 1092 as well, which is only known from a rather poor reproduction. For that reason, and its unusual composition, it would also date from June 1887, and not 1886, as has always been thought. See further p. 41, note 18.

8 Joh. Cohen Gosschalk, 'Vincent van Gogh', in Amsterdam 1905, p. 10: '[...] zelfs heeft hij een dekoratie geschilderd voor een Café Le Tambourin op Montmartre, welke dekoratie toen het Café werd opgeheven, grootendeels verspreid of verloren is geraakt. De violen [...] behoorden nog daartoe' ('[...] he even painted the decoration for a Café Le Tambourin in Montmartre, which decoration was largely dispersed or lost when the café was closed down. The pansies [...] were part of it').

9 Emile Bernard, 'Julien Tanguy dit le «Père Tanguy»', 1908 (Bernard 1994, vol. 1, p. 167): '[...] avait fini par couvrir les grands murs du lieu de ses études'. However, in his 'Souvenirs sur Van Gogh' of 1924 (Bernard 1924, p. 242), he reported that Van Gogh gave his lover flower still lifes 'instead of real flowers, which wither' ('au lieu de fleurs naturelles qui se fanent').

10 Letters 571 and 572.

11 Van Gogh may have been referring to this in letter 640: 'When I was in Paris I always hoped to have a showroom of my own in a café; you know that that fell through'. In July 1887 he wrote 'I won't try to do any more work for the Tambourin' [572], which suggests that there was indeed a business arrangement, although it is unclear what it might have been.

that 'the paintings and all the rest' were at his disposal [571], but he did not go round to collect them.[12] The critic Maurice Beaubourg, anyway, maintained in 1890 that Van Gogh had left everything behind in the restaurant 'as security for the proprietor', while Bernard wrote that the still lifes were auctioned off in batches of ten.[13] This is borne out by the fact that at the beginning of his time in Arles Van Gogh remarked on how few flower still lifes from Paris he had been able to keep, so there is every reason to believe that the works decorating the café were sold at auction, possibly as part of bankruptcy proceedings.[14] This means that we know roughly which paintings hung in the café. They must have included many flower still lifes painted in 1886 whose provenance cannot be traced back to the family collection. That, as noted, is not the case with *Basket of pansies*, which makes it almost certain that it was not hanging in Le Tambourin when the affair between Van Gogh and Agostina Segatori ended.[15]

12 The phrase 'all the rest' must refer to the Japanese prints that Van Gogh was also exhibiting in the café (see cat. 84). He was still fond of his former lover, and may have abandoned the idea of going to pick up the paintings because he thought that it would get her into trouble. It also emerges from letter 571 that he would only collect the paintings after discussing the matter with Theo. In his next letter he also sympathised with what he thought was Segatori's impossible position.
13 Beaubourg 1890, p. 399: 'comme gage au propiétaire'. Everything was sold, according to Bernard 1924, p. 242: '[...] les nombreuses toiles florales qui, liées par tas de dix, furent adjugée de cinquante centimes à un franc le paquet' ('[...] the many flower canvases, done up in batches of ten, were auctioned off for between 50 centimes and 1 franc per batch'; see also his article of 1908, op. cit. [note 9], p. 166). There is only one contradictory opinion. Rewald 1956, pp. 67, 78, note 58a, referred to an unpublished manuscript by Bernard in which it was said that Van Gogh had stated that he had picked everything up in a handcart. That, though, is based on a misunderstanding. The anecdote was not in that manuscript but in Bernard's 'Vincent van Gogh' of 1926 (Bernard 1994, vol. 1, p. 251, see also p. 241), and it was not about the Tambourin but about the exhibition that Van Gogh had organised in the Du Chalet. It is not known whether Segatori really was declared bankrupt, but she could simply have sold the paintings at auction in order to provide herself with some money.
14 Letter 640.
15 It is known indirectly from letter 572 that Van Gogh was still making paintings for Segatori's restaurant until well into 1887: 'You can be sure of one thing, and that's that I won't try to do any more work for the Tambourin'. Although it is logical to assume that they included his still lifes from May and June (see note 7), it is clear that not only was cat. 102 not hanging there when the affair ended and was not auctioned off with the rest, but that F 322 JH 1292 and F 213 JH 1247 were not there either, for like cat. 102 they were part of the family collection.

PROVENANCE
1887-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1926 on loan to the Museum Mesdag, The Hague; 1927-30 on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; 1962 Vincent van Gogh Foundation (ratified in 1982); 1931-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

LITERATURE
Bonger 1890, no. 49 [Corbeille de bourriches et des pensées]; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 72, vol. 2, pl. LXVII; De la Faille 1939, p. 220, no. 286; De la Faille 1970, pp. 124, 621; Orton 1971, p. 10, note 24; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 78, 228; Hulsker 1977, pp. 236, 237, 241; Hulsker 1980, pp. 237, 241; Amsterdam 1987, p. 326, no. 1.121; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 85; Hulsker 1996, pp. 236, 237; Zemel 1997, p. 186; Van den Berg/De Keijzer 2003, pp. 15, 16; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 114, 115, 118, 122, 124, 130; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 63; Coyle 2007, p. 336; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 46, 285, 306; Letters 2009, letter 572, note 3.

EXHIBITIONS
1892 Rotterdam, no cat. known [for sale]; 1905 Amsterdam I, no. 51 [Dfl. 850]; 1905 Utrecht, no. 15 [Dfl. 800]; 1905 Leiden, no. 15 [Dfl. 800]; 1906 Rotterdam, no. 15; 1906 Middelburg, no cat. [Dfl. 800]; 1910 Berlin, no. 6 [not for sale]; 1911 Frankfurt am Main, no cat. known; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 35; 1946 Copenhagen, no. 33; 1947 Groningen, no. 35; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 57; 1949 Middelburg, no. 11; 1954-55 Bern, no. 24; 1955 Antwerp, no. 165; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 79; 1956 Leeuwarden, no. 11; 1971-72 Paris, no. 18; 1998-99 Enschede, no cat.

103
Horse chestnut tree in blossom

Paris, mid-May 1887
Oil on canvas
55.6 x 46.0-46.3 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 126 V/1962
F 270a JH 1272

Underlying image:
indeterminate
After March 1886

The dabs of white paint in the foliage of this old chestnut tree show that it is in full flower. The first blossom appeared on horse chestnuts in the Paris region on 11 May in 1887, and since they flower for around a fortnight this painting would have been made in the middle of the month.[1] In the background is a stone wall, so the tree stood in a garden and not out on a street.

Horse chestnut tree in blossom is probably an exploratory study for *Labourer on a country road* (fig. 103a; 48 x 73 cm), an out-and-out Pointillist work in a time-consuming technique that must have been worked up and finished in the studio. On the left there is a garden lined with horse chestnuts, and since they are as luxuriant and heavily in blossom as the one in this painting it very much looks as if the location is the same. There is a stretch of grass to the right of the country road for which there is also a small study now in the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo (103c; 31.5 x 40.5 cm). *Labourer on a country road* is closely related to the equally Neo-Impressionist *Garden with courting couples: square Saint-Pierre* (cat. 104), which was itself preceded by two exploratory studies (cat. 101, fig. 101a).

Horse chestnut tree in blossom was painted over another scene that is now unrecognisable. The fairly loosely woven *figure* 10 canvas (Table 3.5, no. 51) was commercially primed with lead white in oil coloured with a little orange and organic red pigment, and since that ground is typical of Van Gogh's Paris works the hidden image would also have been painted in that period. He covered it up with a thin, pinkish grey ground layer consisting of lead white, barytes, emerald green, French ultramarine and fine iron oxide red (p. 117, figs. 37, 40). Covering layers with exactly the same composition were also found in *In the café* (cat. 84) and two versions of scenes with trees (cat. 113, fig. 113a), which were painted in January-March and the second half of July 1887 respectively (see Table 5). When Van Gogh applied a covering layer on a series of failed pictures he generally reused the supports in rapid succession (see cats. 92, 93, 95, 99-102, 111, 112), but that was evidently not the case here.

In order to frame the new subject properly, he traced a standard *paysage* 12 composition frame (60 x 46 cm) in the middle of the canvas, as can be seen in the infrared reflectogram (fig. 103b). That size of frame is exactly the same width as the canvas and 5 cm higher, so he only marked its inside edges. He then made a detailed underdrawing, probably with charcoal, which shows up clearly in the infrared reflectogram and is also partly visible to the naked eye, especially at the bottom of the tree and by the stone wall. It is an uncommonly wild sketch that is nevertheless very reminiscent of those under *Basket of pansies* (cat. 102) and *Undergrowth* (cat. 113). The shaded volumes in the tree are accentuated with coarse zigzag lines, while the wall is only sketchily indicated on the left. It is impossible to say what the sinuous lines on the right are meant to denote, but they were not reproduced in the paint.

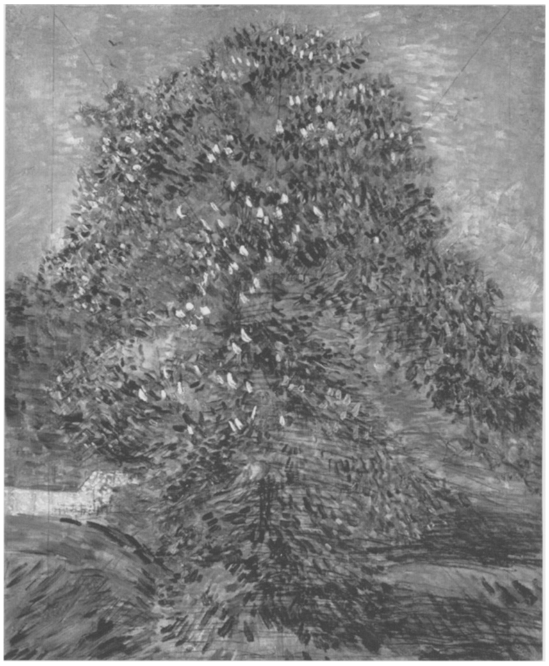
1 Relevés Météorologiques, Parc de Saint-Maur, May 1887, Paris, Météo-France.



103 Horse chestnut tree in blossom



103a *Labourer on a country road* (F 361 JH 1260), 1886. Private collection.



103b Infrared reflectogram of cat. 103.

This view of the garden was painted rapidly in a single session and has a limited palette dominated by blue, green and yellow. The grass and foliage in the background are barely defined at all, and it very much appears that Van Gogh was mainly interested in practising the rendering of light and shade in the flowering tree. He painted the chestnut first, and modelled it solely with short strokes which are not repeated anywhere else in the scene apart from near the stone wall. The tree and grass were painted with thick, buttery strokes, while the sky and the background foliage were kept thin so as to impart a sense of depth to the scene.

The pinkish grey underlayer provided an excellent basis for swiftly working up the tonal relationships in the tree, and it has been left visible everywhere between the brushstrokes. Van Gogh used chrome orange to suggest the sunlight on the leaves, and it stands out light and warm against the emerald green of the shadowed foliage. Unfortunately, the dirty surface of the painting and the spotty varnish prevent the interplay of colours from being seen to its best advantage.



103c *Patch of grass* (F 583 JH 1263), 1887. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Bonger 1890, no. 73 [Marronnier en fleurs (10)]; Druet 1920, no. 20083; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 79, vol. 2, pl. LXXIV [as 270bis]; De la Faille 1939, p. 265, no. 359 [F 270bis]; De la Faille 1970, pp. 136, 137, 622; Welsh-Ovcharov 1971 II, p. 41; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 97, 124, note 45, 226; Hulsker 1977, pp. 278, 280, 284; Hulsker 1980, pp. 278, 280, 284; Amsterdam 1987, p. 332, no. 1.153; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 86; Hulsker 1996, pp. 278, 280, 284; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 56, 57, 59, 61, 68, 74, note 89; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 78, 286, 306.

Exhibitions
1905 Amsterdam I, no. 61 [Dfl. 900]; 1905 Utrecht, no. 19 [Dfl. 900]; 1905 Leiden, no. 19 [Dfl. 900]; 1906 Rotterdam, no. 19; 1906 Middelburg, no cat. [Dfl. 900]; 1908 Paris, no. 10 [Ffr. 3,000]; 1908 Munich, no. 14 (Dfl. 1,200); 1908 Dresden, no. 14 [Dfl. 1,200]; 1908 Frankfurt am Main, no. 17 (for sale); 1908 Zürich, no. 9; 1908 The Hague & Amsterdam, no cat. known, no. 25; 1908 Berlin II, no cat. known [Dfl. 1,800]; 1911 Amsterdam, no. 19 [Dfl. 3,000]; 1924 Basel, no. 19 (Dfl. 6,000); 1924 Zürich, no. 16 (Sfr. 14,000); 1924 Stuttgart, no. 4 [Dfl. 6,000]; 1925 Paris, no. 7 [not for sale]; 1925 The Hague, no cat. [Dfl. 6,000]; 1928 Berlin, no. 20; 1928 Vienna, no. 12; 1928 Frankfurt am Main, no. 12; 1928-29 Hanover, Munich & Leipzig, no cat., no. 6, no cat. known; 1929 Utrecht, no. 14 [not for sale]; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 43; 1932 Manchester, no. 43; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 67 [270bis]; 1955 Antwerp, no. 188 [270b]; 1955 Dordrecht, no. 54; 1971-72 Paris, no. 27; 1998-99 Enschede, no cat.

Paris, mid to late May 1887
Oil on canvas
75.0 x 112.7 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 19 V/1962
F 314 JH 1258

Underlying images (?):
indeterminate
After March 1886

Letter 592

104
Garden with courting couples: square Saint-Pierre

After arriving in Paris Van Gogh mainly worked with small, easily manageable canvases when painting out of doors, but that changed in 1887 when he suddenly produced several very large ones. The first of them, in May, was this *Garden with courting couples: square Saint-Pierre*, which was followed that summer by two large landscapes of Montmartre that were equally ambitious (cat. 115 and fig. 115a). He exhibited this scene in a park in late 1887 and early 1888 in the rehearsal room of the Théâtre Libre founded by André Antoine, while the two other landscapes and *Piles of French novels and roses in a glass ('Romans Parisiens')* (fig. 134c) were sent by Theo to the exhibition of Les Indépendants in May 1888 at Vincent's suggestion.[1] Both venues were dominated by the Neo-Impressionists, so Van Gogh evidently had ambitions along those lines with his three large pictures.

The subject of *Garden with courting couples* is as unusual as its size. Van Gogh himself called it 'the garden with lovers' [592], and they are certainly the main subject, although their amorousness is fairly low-key. Only the two on the left are cautiously embracing, but that is enough to colour our interpretation of the other two couples, as Van Gogh undoubtedly intended. The pair on the right are merely arm in arm and are standing stock still on the grass as if posing. The third, very sketchy couple are lying or sitting on the ground just in front of the bushes, which does suggest some intimacy, but the distance between the man and the woman is too great for them to be embracing.

It has been suggested that Van Gogh was influenced by the theme of the garden of love, the history of which goes back to the 15th century.[2] The problem here is that we do not know if he was actually familiar with that tradition. It was a highly intellectual and rather refined genre that is difficult to square with his earthy, Realist repertoire.[3] It has also been assumed that the subject was inspired by the oeuvre of Monticelli, whom he greatly admired and who had specialised in *fêtes galantes* involving merrymakers and courting couples.[4] Van Gogh regarded the Provençal artist not only as a true Realist but also as 'a melancholy man, an unhappy, rather resigned man, seeing high society's party pass by, the lovers of his day, painting them, analyzing them' [853]. This interpretation is contradicted by the fact that Van Gogh had abandoned Monticelli as a model in the winter of 1886-87 and had turned instead to the Neo-Impressionists, so it is hard to explain why he would have suddenly reverted to Monticelli at the very time when he had embarked on a new artistic course, and with a subject that he had evidently not considered worth imitating up until then.[5] It did, however, fit in well with his need to depict modern and urban life as incisively as possible, in which he was strongly influenced by the Realist literature of his day.[6] Searching out sheltered spots for moments of intimacy was a tender necessity for unmarried couples, and Van Gogh's painting suggests that this corner of the garden was a favourite place of assignation for lovers.

1 The progressive Théâtre Libre at 96 rue Blanche in Paris was founded by André Antoine and opened its doors on 30 March 1887; see Paris 1988, p. 34.
2 Van Uitert 1983, p. 38, esp. note 45.
3 He was certainly not directly acquainted with this literature, and only learned about it indirectly in Arles when he read Henry Cochin's 'Boccace d'après ses oeuvres et les témoignages contemporains'; see Van Uitert 1983, pp. 37-41. Cochin's article was published in *Revue des Deux Mondes* 58 (15 July 1888), 3rd series, vol. 88, pp. 373-413.
4 Fowle 2003, p. 146, referred in this context to a work by Monticelli in Alexander Reid's collection which Van Gogh later referred to as 'the lovers that Reid had' [686].
5 Van Gogh said of Monticelli in letter 689 from Arles that: 'sometimes I really believe I'm continuing that man's work, only I haven't yet done figures of lovers, like him', from which one could tentatively conclude that he did not, in fact, regard his Paris painting as being in the style of Monticelli. For his abrupt break with the Provençal master see pp. 72-74.
6 Sund 1992, p. 162, cited the influence of modern novels. Working-class lovers were forced to seek their moments of intimacy out of doors, as was described poignantly in naturalistic novels of the day, but Van Gogh had no need of such books to confirm what he saw with his own eyes.



104 Garden with courting couples: square Saint-Pierre

It has been thought since the 1960s that the garden was situated in the Voyer d'Argenson park in Asnières, but it turns out that that is incorrect.[7] The painting was given the title 'Petit jardin à Montmartre' ('Little garden in Montmartre')[8] in the 1890 inventory of Theo's collection, and it is now known that it is a view of the western part of square Saint-Pierre looking to the southwest. Van Gogh chose a vantage point that obscured the surrounding buildings behind the trees and thickets, which is why the scene was not associated with Paris for so long.

He had painted several views of parks and gardens since arriving in Paris, but none of them with courting couples.[9] The first was *The Blute-fin windmill* (fig. 104a) of February-March 1887, and it can be deduced from its date that it was not so much art or literature that suggested it as a subject as his own personal feelings.[10] It was painted during his affair with Agostina Segatori (see cat. 84), and that had still not ended when he depicted the subject of courting couples in the present picture, not against the backdrop of the Moulin de la Galette entertainment centre but in the public garden in square Saint-Pierre, south of the Sacré-Coeur, which was under construction at the time.[11] That autobiographical background means that *Garden with courting couples* should not be seen as an expression on the part of a detached melancholic like Monticelli, 'seeing high society's party pass by, the lovers of his day, painting them, analyzing them' [853], as some have believed, but more as an ode to a stage of falling in love, although one has to admit that there is not that much trace of the associated euphoria in the picture.[12] The subject disappeared from Van Gogh's repertoire after his affair with Agostina Segatori ended, but he took it up again in Arles, when he depicted *Les Alyscamps* as the local 'site for fleeting encounters', but by then the originally personal connotations had made way for more general ones.[13]

Van Gogh prepared *Garden with courting couples* very carefully. He first explored the spot in a small, swiftly executed painting (cat. 101), followed by a much larger, fully Pointillist work in which he adopted a wider field of view and placed a woman in the centre (fig. 101a). This, the large work with the three courting couples, was painted last, and shows the same spot in the garden from yet another angle. He retained the Neo-Impressionist approach of the previous painting, but abandoned the Pointillist dots and was also less realistic in the depiction. Although the arabesques described by the paths do resemble those in the previous studies they are partly imaginary (compare fig. 101f), but this was done deliberately in order to make the fairly static picture more lively.

This garden scene is on good-quality, tightly woven canvas measuring 75.0 x 112.7 cm (Table 3.3, no. 13), which does not match any of the standard sizes.[14] He could have used standard stretcher bars for the width (for example those of a *figure* 80 or *haute paysage* 100 and 120, measuring 113.4 cm), but that does not apply to the height, so he must have ordered the frame on which the canvas was mounted specially. The priming is also unusual, consisting as it does of calcium carbonate white in glue topped with a layer of zinc white.[15]

The present image was painted on top of two other scenes, both of them unfinished, so Van Gogh originally had other plans for his expensive canvas support. Nothing can be said about the first scene, which was painted immediately on top of the ground, other than that there is some orange in a paint cross-section. That thin initial layer was then covered with two whitish layers consisting mainly of lead

7 This question is discussed in cat. 101.
8 See cat. 101, note 11.
9 In them and his street scenes he had only depicted couples arm in arm, often clad in dark clothing, who displayed no intimate interest in each other (see, for example, cat. 92, F 223 JH 1111 and F 225 JH 1110). For drawings of this subject see Drawings 3, cats. 228-30. The only exception is a sketch of a couple seen from the back with their arms around each other that was probably made in the spring of 1886 (SD 1705r JH 1028; see ibid., cat. 234, p. 102). Van Gogh's love of gardens and parks is described in Van Uitert 1999, pp. 145-74.
10 For the dating see Tellegen 2001, p. 162.
11 Another work that dates from May is *Basket of pansies* (cat. 102), which was very probably intended to be part of the floral decoration of Agostina Segatori's Le Tambourin.
12 Van Uitert 1983, p. 38, esp. note 45, and Thomson 2002, pp. 56, 57. Nochlin 2002, p. 63, concluded on the evidence of the rather stiff figures and virtual absence of detail in their faces that nowhere in this painting does 'the vital sap of Eros, so brilliantly conjured up by artists from Titian to Renoir to Picasso, [flow] freely'. Homburg 2002, pp. 57-60, esp. p. 59, believed that the courting couples in the large painting 'symbolize Van Gogh's yearning for a partner in his personal life'.
13 Chicago/Amsterdam 2001-02, p. 178. The paintings of *Les Alyscamps* with courting couples are F 487 JH 1621 and F 568 JH 1622. Admittedly, the couples are not embracing, but it is assumed that they are lovers because the men are Zouaves. Van Gogh had set out to find a suitable context for depicting lovers as soon as he arrived in Arles. His first attempt was F 544 JH 1369, of seamen and their girlfriends (see letter 176; letter sketch F – JH 1370, of a painting which only survives as a fragment: F 544 JH 1369). The couple in F 485 JH 1615 are probably lovers as well.
14 The closest equivalent is a *marine* 50 (73 x 116 cm).
15 The only other painting in this catalogue with a layer consisting mainly of zinc white is cat. 66.

white, which served as the ground for the start of a grid and a line contouring the picture surface. Part of that grid can be seen with the naked eye on the tacking margins, and consists of horizontal and vertical lines in thinned black paint which were drawn along a straight edge.[16] They are at irregular intervals from each other and were drawn when the canvas was lying flat and before it was stretched on a frame.

Oddly enough, Van Gogh covered over that grid with a layer of whitish paint containing lead white, zinc white and some fine orange, brown and black. It was on that substrate that he painted this garden scene. Examination with infrared reflectography not only revealed the lines of the underlying grid but also a few construction lines for the scene itself that are of a similar thinned consistency. The purpose of those lines is unclear.[17]

Van Gogh started by making a detailed underdrawing of the garden scene. He reserved forms during the painting process, including some very small ones, such as the slender tree trunks in the surrounding shrubbery. Only a few traces of this detailed drawing were found, however. There is a thin dark line marking the axis of the couple on the right that is not visible with infrared reflectography, and in the path in the foreground there is a line in carbon black running parallel to the bottom edge of the canvas that was reinforced with blue paint. It is 3.5 cm up from the bottom edge, and since that is the usual width of one of the bars of the perspective frames that Van Gogh used, it seems likely that he employed that aid again here.

Although the tracing of the frame indicates that Van Gogh laid in the scene out of doors, as he did for his later, equally ambitious *Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette* (cat. 115) and *Allotments in Montmartre* (fig. 115a), he would have completed the picture in the studio. He took plenty of time over it and worked on it for several sessions, leaving enough time in between them for the paint to dry before he set to work again. For example, the background was dry when he began on the couples on the left and right.[18] He spent at least three sessions on those figures alone, first modelling them loosely in muted colours, then adding the contours and touches of bright colour in the clothing before finishing them off with local hatchings.

Garden with courting couples was the ambitious high point of a new phase in Van Gogh's version of Neo-Impressionism. At the exhibition of Les Indépendants at the end of March and beginning of April 1887 he had seen that Seurat and Signac, the trailblazers of Pointillism, differed from him in that they did not use a light-coloured substrate in order to achieve a luminous effect. Instead they covered their canvases almost entirely with colourful dots to which white was added. This not only made the strokes lighter but also reduced the colour intensity, giving them a pastel-like, 'chalky' look.[19]

Van Gogh imitated that manner literally in *Labourer on a country road* (fig. 103a) and in his Pointillist study of the park (fig. 101a), and then applied it to this garden scene, but in a more ambivalent way.[20] The dense network of colourful dabs was not applied everywhere. In fact, there are places where the white ground is barely covered at all, such as the path in the foreground. Van Gogh hatched and accentuated with a will using a deep organic red in places which seems to have retained its colour well. He also let the underlayers show through in the finished picture, near the couple on the right, for example, where the green of the landscape is visible beneath the pink of the woman's dress.



104a *The Blute-fin windmill* (F 348 JH 1182), 1887. Buenos Aires, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes.

16 Some of the lines are not easy to make out because the edges of the canvas are very damaged and dirty.
17 Van Gogh may have planned to make a copy after a Japanese print, because that was all he used grids for in Paris, as far as we know (see cats. 131-33). The size of the canvas, which has the same height to width ratio as many Japanese prints, could be further evidence of this. Furthermore, underdrawing in the sky at upper right seems to depict the mitred corner of a frame where a narrow element along the top adjoins a broader one down the right side, resembling the variable-width decorative borders of his copies after Japanese prints. However, this hypothesis is contradicted by the fact that Van Gogh used the old French system of measurements of *pouces* (1 *pouce* = 2.7 cm) for his grids for copies after Japanese prints (see cats. 131, 132), and that is not the system on which the lines in this painting are based.
18 By contrast, the pair seated in the background was painted directly on top of the landscape while it was still wet.
19 The Neo-Impressionist palette is discussed in Callen 2000, pp. 141, 154.
20 See also pp. 150, 151.

Although he covered much of the picture surface with small dabs of colour applied with a fine brush less than 5 mm wide, he rejected the brushstroke as a *point*, which was how Seurat and Signac treated it. Instead he applied the paint in a varied way, and did not shun a lively impasto. The tree trunks, for instance, were painted with long meandering strokes, with short parallel hatchings to suggest their bark. The triangular red impressions of a brush in the foliage seem to suggest blossoms. There are oblique strokes in the sky, and Van Gogh deliberately worked around the tops of the trees when the paint was only half dry, giving it a crumbly texture evoking the effect of shimmering light.

Although the brushwork is often descriptive, there is also a repetitive, decorative pattern. The final hatchings in the figures' dress barely follow the shape of their bodies at all, and the blue strokes in the man on the left even look as if they are floating on top of the undermodelling like a separate pattern. The ground around the chestnut tree in the left foreground is not covered with grass, as the two preceding paintings of the garden suggest (cat. 101, fig. 101a), but Van Gogh nevertheless gave it a greenish tinge in order to reinforce the arabesque, meandering effect of the paths and to prevent the foreground from becoming monotonously light in hue. The static, carefully composed scene fits in well with that decorative approach, and it very much looks as if this was all inspired by Seurat's example, which Van Gogh had been able to study closely at the Indépendants exhibition.

PROVENANCE

1887-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-52 V.W. van Gogh; 1927-30 on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; 1952-60 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1960-62 Theo van Gogh Foundation; 1962 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1931-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

LITERATURE

Bonger 1890, no. 90 [Petit jardin à Montmartre (40)]; Druet 1920, no. 8172; De la Faille 1927, ill. p. 87; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 90, vol. 2, pl. LXXXVI; De la Faille 1939, p. 270, no. 368; London etc. 1947-48, p. 28, no. 17; Leprohon 1964, p. 414; London 1968-69, pp. 65, 66, no. 79; De la Faille 1970, pp. 154, 155, 623; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 95, 166, 168, 233, 251; Hulsker 1977, pp. 278, 281; Hulsker 1980, pp. 278, 281; Van Uitert 1983, pp. 82, 83; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 174, 175, 332, no. 1.155; Thomson 1987, pp. 14, 16; Amsterdam 1988, pp. 103, 104, no. 43; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 88; Paris 1988, pp. 104, 105, no. 33; Pickvance 1988, p. 95; Amsterdam 1990, pp. 76, 77, no. 22; Sund 1992, pp. 161, 162; Hulsker 1996, pp. 278, 280, 281; Thomson 2002; Amsterdam 2003, pp. 116, 271, no. 136; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 119, 124; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 48, 50, 51, 64, 74, note 74; Van Heugten 2008, p. 43; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 81, 292, 306 ; Letters 2009, letter 572, note 6, letter 592, note 17.

EXHIBITIONS

1887-88 Paris, no cat.; 1905 Amsterdam I, no. 33 [Dfl. 1,400]; 1905 Berlin II, no cat.; 1905 Hamburg, no. 19 [Dfl. 1,600]; 1905 Dresden, no. 16; 1906 Vienna, no. 28 (for sale); 1908 Paris, no. 22 [Ffr. 5,800]; 1908 Berlin I, no. 4 [Dfl. 2,500]; 1908 Dresden, no. 71 [Dfl. 2,500]; 1908 Berlin II, no cat. known; 1909-10 Munich, no. 1, Frankfurt am Main, Dresden & Chemnitz, no cat. known [Dfl. 6,000]; 1910 Berlin, no. 50 [DM. 8,000]; 1911 Frankfurt am Main, no cat. known; 1911 Amsterdam, no. 24 [Dfl. 10,000]; 1911-12 Hamburg, no cat. known [DM.? 8,000]; 1911-12 Bremen, no cat.; 1912 Dresden & Breslau, no. 39 (not for sale); 1914 Berlin, no. 61; 1923-24 London, no. 20; 1924 Basel, no. 20 (not for sale); 1924 Zürich, no. 17 (not for sale); 1924 Stuttgart, no. 5 (not for sale); 1925 Paris, no. 16 [not for sale]; 1925 The Hague, no cat.; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 34; 1926 Munich, no. 2094 (not for sale); 1927 Paris, no cat.; 1930 Amsterdam, no. 14; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 54; 1932 Manchester, no. 19; 1936-37 Rotterdam, no. 15; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1946 Maastricht & Heerlen, no. 38; 1946 Stockholm, Gothenburg & Malmö, no. 39; 1946 Copenhagen, no. 41; 1946-47 Liège, Brussels & Mons, no. 57; 1947 Paris, no. 58; 1947 Geneva, no. 59; 1947 Groningen, no. 40; 1947-48 London, Birmingham & Glasgow, no. 17; 1948 Bergen & Oslo, no. 12; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 84; 1949 Middelburg, no. 51; 1951 Lyon & Grenoble, no. 23; 1951 Saint-Rémy, no. 23; 1952 Enschede, no. 27; 1952 Eindhoven, no. 29; 1953 The Hague, no. 76; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 79; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 70; 1954 Zürich, no. 17; 1954-55 Bern, no. 31; 1955 Antwerp, no. 184; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 95; 1956 Leeuwarden, no. 19; 1957 Breda, no. 40; 1957 Marseille, no. 31; 1957-58 Leiden & Schiedam, no. 13; 1958 Deventer, no. 11; 1958 Mons, no. 12; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 26; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 21; 1960-61 Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg & Toronto, no. 29; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 24; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 24; 1963 Humlebæk, no. 19; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 19; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 31; 1968-69 London, no. 79; 1969-70 Los Angeles, Saint Louis & Philadelphia, no. 17; 1970-71 Baltimore, San Francisco & New York, no. 17; 1971-72 Paris, no. 37; 1988 Paris, no. 33; 1988 Amsterdam, no. 43; 1990 Amsterdam, no. 22; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 32; 2003 Amsterdam I, no. 136.

105
Exterior of a restaurant in Asnières

Paris, mid-May-mid-June 1887
Oil on canvas
18.8 x 27.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 134 V/1962
F 321 JH 1311

Van Gogh's landscape repertoire changed in the spring of 1887. Since arriving in Paris he had concentrated mainly on recording sites on and around the hill of Montmartre (see cats. 64, 65, 91-93), but in the middle of May 1887 he suddenly turned his attention to Asnières, a village six kilometres northwest of Paris on the north bank of the Seine. The opening of a railway bridge in 1837 turned this sleepy country village into an attractive destination for Parisians day-trippers.[1] 'There are numerous villas,' the Baedeker guide of 1889 reported, 'and the banks of the Seine are very popular with young people as a place of amusement in summer.'[2] It was not just young people who were charmed by the spot, but artists as well. Auguste Renoir and Claude Monet painted there in the 1870s, as did Georges Seurat, Paul Signac and Emile Bernard in the following decade.[3]

It is not known precisely when Van Gogh first visited Asnières and its surroundings, but judging by the trees in full leaf in the landscapes he painted there it must have been at the end of April or beginning of May 1887 at the earliest. However, there is reason to believe that it was later from a letter of mid-July,[4] in which he wrote that he had plenty of canvases when he started going on his painting trips to Asnières, thanks to the generosity of the colourman Père Tanguy, and suggested that that was not the case before then.[5] Since we know that he was painting on top of rejected canvases until around the middle of May (see cats. 91-93, 95, 99-104), his first excursions to the village must have taken place after that. It was not until the middle of July that shortage of money again forced him to reuse canvases (cats. 111-14, fig. 113a, cats. 116-20, fig. 116a), and his last visits there were probably at the end of that month. It was then that he again began painting landscapes in Montmartre, and the largest of them can be seen as the crowning touch on his recent efforts to master a sunnier palette (cat. 115, fig. 115a).[6] In addition to several drawings he made between 30 and 40 paintings in and around Asnières, including views of the Seine, the village and the woods (see cats. 103, 105, 107-13).[7] He combined nine of them into three triptychs, which were described in 1890 as 'La grande Jatte', 'Bord de la Seine à Asnières' and 'Bord de la Seine à Clichy'.[8]

This small, almost intimate view of a house with a yellow facade that extended over two storeys (witness the pink shutter at top left), is one of the works he made in the riverside village. It was given the title 'Devant de restaurant à Asnières' ('In front of a restaurant in Asnières') in the 1890 inventory of Theo's collection,[9] and since Andries Bonger, the compiler of the inventory, had been a close friend of both brothers since 1886 there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of his description. In addition to this view of the restaurant there is a drawing and three larger paintings of similar subjects, and given its size this work may have been the first, exploratory study.[10] Most of the restaurants in Asnières were beside the Seine (fig. 105a), but it is impossible to make out whether this one was as well.

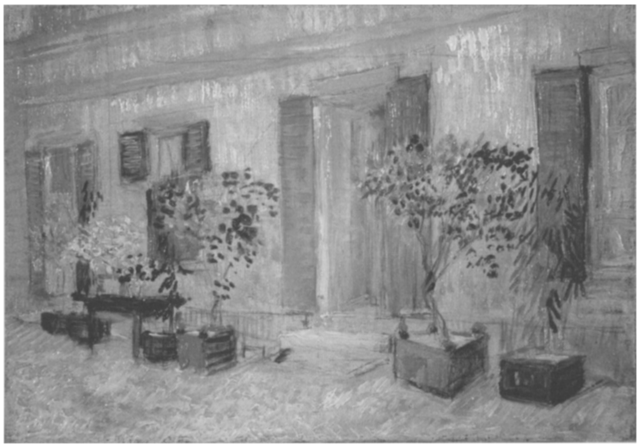
1 Information on Asnières' reputation as an artists' village will be found in London 1997, pp. 116-19, 132-45.
2 Baedeker 1889, p. 274: 'Il y a quantité de villas et les bords de la Seine sont très fréquentés dans la bonne saison par la jeunesse, comme lieu de divertissement'.
3 Both Signac and Bernard were very familiar with Asnières, because their parents lived there.
4 One wonders whether Bernard did indeed encourage Van Gogh to work in Asnières, because he only started going there when Bernard left for Brittany at the end of April 1887. See Mannheim/Amsterdam 1990, p. 97, for the dating of Bernard's trip.
5 'Because remember when I started working at Asnières I had lots of canvases and Tanguy was very good to me' [571].
6 Cat. 115 and F 350 JH 1245. De la Faille 1970, Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, and Hulsker 1996 believed that Van Gogh painted in Asnières until the late summer of 1887, but see pp. 45-49.
7 The drawings are F 1409 JH 1276 and F 1408 JH 1252 (see Drawings 3, cats. 312, 313, pp. 278-85).
8 These descriptions are from Bonger 1890, nos. 70, 81 and 82. The triptychs cannot be identified for certain; see Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov in Paris 1988, pp. 13-15, 29, note 9, and Ronald Pickvance in Martigny 2000, pp. 144, 145. For a more factual approach see Stolwijk/Veenenbos 2002, pp. 142, 143, no. 12/7.
9 Bonger 1890, no. 61.
10 The other works are F 312 JH 1253, F 313 JH 1251, F 355 JH 1266 and F 1408 JH 1252. They are dated to the spring in Hulsker 1996, but the summer seems far likelier. See also Drawings 3, cat. 313, pp. 283-85.



105 Exterior of a restaurant in Asnières



105a Postcard showing the quayside at Asnières. Private collection.



105b Infrared reflectogram of cat. 105.



105c Detail of cat. 105 showing colour preserved along the bottom edge.

The tubs in front of the building are filled with plants. On the far right is an oleander, and on the left and in the centre are citrus fruits. The small plant on the table on the right is unidentifiable, but the one on the left is a fuchsia. It is the only flowering plant in the picture, which is why the painting has been dated to the period mid-May to mid-June 1887.[11]

Van Gogh used a loosely woven canvas of the standard *haute paysage* 3 size (27.0 x 19.0 cm) (Table 3.5, no. 45). It was sized and given a thin coat of pale pinkish ground on the picture area consisting of lead white with a little orange ochre. An underdrawing, probably made with graphite, is visible with the naked eye and even more so with infrared reflectography, and indicates the positions of the tubs, windows, shutters, door and steps.

Several construction lines show that Van Gogh used a perspective frame to help him with the sketch. The wires intersect precisely halfway across the width of canvas, just above the door. He followed this drawn design very closely. The ground served as the warm base tone on which the various elements were filled in with thin paint, with the brush following the volumes of the forms. As the picture progressed he gradually used more buttery paint, working up to a lively impasto in the

11 De la Faille 1970, p. 156, no. 321, placed it in the summer of 1887, and that was followed by later authors.



105d Detail of photograph of the drawing room in Jo van Gogh-Bonger's apartment at Koninginneweg 77, c. 1915. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

foreground and the foliage of the plants. He used fine brushes (although not as many as usual) and a loose touch, leaving the pinkish ground clearly visible between the strokes and along the contours.

The range of colours is limited. Warm, pale ochre yellows alternate in the wall of the restaurant. The subdued green of the plants stands out against it, as does the mint green of the shutters and tubs, which is a mixture of emerald green, chrome yellow, zinc white and lead white. Touches of colour were added to enliven the scene: dark blue hatchings and contour lines, the pink of the fuchsia and the orange of the earth in the tubs. However, discolouration has upset the original colour composition somewhat. The vague, rather cold foreground was originally a pale orange similar to the colour of the earth in the tubs, as shown by well-preserved paint covered with paper at the bottom of the painting (fig. 105c). A warm foreground of that kind would have considerably accentuated the complementary contrast between the orange and the mint green.

Jo van Gogh-Bonger was fond of this painting. It was part of the permanent decoration of the drawing room in her Amsterdam home (fig. 105d), between the bookcase and the mantelpiece.

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
Bonger 1890, no. 61 [Devant de restaurant à Asnières (3)]; Bremmer 1927, vol. 3, pp. 21, 22, no. 22; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 92, vol. 2, pl. LXXXVIII; De la Faille 1939, p. 268, no. 365; De la Faille 1970, pp. 156, 157, 623; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 234; Hulsker 1977, p. 292; Hulsker 1980, pp. 290, 292; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 178, 179, 335, no. 1.173; Heijbroek 1991, p. 207, ill. 49; Kyoto/Tokyo 1992, pp. 74, 75, no. 9; Hulsker 1996, pp. 288, 290, 292; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 67; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 86, 285, 306.

EXHIBITIONS
1905 Amsterdam I, no. 37 [not for sale]; 1930 Amsterdam, no. 18; 1937 Paris, no. 141; 1937 Oslo, no. 6; 1938 Copenhagen, no. 13; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1946-47 Liège, Brussels & Mons, no. 59; 1947 Paris, no. 62; 1947 Geneva, no. 63; 1947-48 London, Birmingham & Glasgow, no. 18; 1948 Bergen & Oslo, no. 13; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 86; 1949-50 New York & Chicago, no. 50; 1953 Zundert, no. 16; 1953 Hoensbroek, no. 29; 1953 IJmuiden, no. 18; 1953 Assen, no. 16; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 16; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 22; 1963 Humlebæk, no. 20; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 20; 1965 Charleroi & Ghent, no. 11; 1971-72 Paris, no. 39; 1992 Kyoto & Tokyo, no. 9; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 31.

106
Bank of the Seine

Paris, mid-May-late July 1887
Oil on canvas
32.0 x 46.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 77 V/1962
F 293 JH 1269

Bank of the Seine is another of the studies that Van Gogh painted outside Paris. We see the river and its bank and, with a little bit of imagination, standing and seated fishermen. There is a path along the top of the bank with fences and low walls behind it fronting plots of land with trees and a house. On the far left is a robinia, in the centre dark green horse chestnuts, to the right of them a weeping willow, and on the far right a few more horse chestnuts with white and red dots among their leaves.[1]

The vantage point is quite low, so the landscape would not have been painted from a bridge.[2] The bank of the river is not that far off, and although there is only one house to be seen, the tree-filled gardens of the villas belonging to the wealthy middle class lie behind the fences and gates. There are no points of reference on the riverbank, so it is impossible to identify the precise spot, but since Van Gogh was not in the habit of ranging very far from his usual haunts in search of a new subject it is likely that this work was painted near the Île de la Grand Jatte.[3]

In common with most of the Asnières studies, it is difficult to date *Bank of the Seine*. Van Gogh usually began exploring a new landscape with small studies, working up to larger sizes, so this work may have been made at the start of his forays to the village, although it is often dated to the summer because of its sunny appearance.[4] There is something to be said for both theories, which is why we are adopting the wide margin of mid-May to late-July 1887.

Van Gogh had to record the subjects he found on his trips to Asnières rapidly, in a single session, which is why, like Signac and other Neo-Impressionists, he preferred absorbent grounds for his *plein-air* studies, because they soaked up the oil and speeded up the drying of the paint. The support of *Bank of the Seine* met those requirements. It is a very finely woven canvas of the standard *paysage* 8 size, and has a very thin ground of pure lead white that scarcely covers the nubs of the canvas weave (Table 3.5, no. 59, and p. 109, fig. 19). It is true that Van Gogh had already used absorbent or semi-absorbent types of surface for painting his *à l'essence* works, but they were usually combined with heavily thinned, almost watercolour paints.[5] In *Bank of the Seine*, though, the paint was not thinned and was thus rich in medium, as was the case with other paintings of the period.[6] In view of the 'dry' texture of the brushwork in this painting it seems quite likely that Van Gogh followed the *plein-air* painter's usual practice of blotting the excess medium from his tube paints before using them.

Many of the *plein-air* studies from Asnières do not have a detailed underdrawing (cats. 108, 110-13). In this one Van Gogh merely indicated the diagonal of the riverbank and the outlines of the trees with a little thin blue. He often used only a limited range of colours, which was of course practical for a study made out of doors. He always used intense colours, and this canvas is dominated by bright green, yellow, pink, blue and orange.

1 Since the dots are right next to each other it is unlikely that they are meant to represent blossom. Van Gogh probably wanted to make these trees more colourful than the ones further along the bank.
2 According to Tokyo 1995, p. 122, no. 8, Van Gogh painted the view from a bridge, but that was corrected by Pickvance in Martigny 2000, p. 294, no. 29. Welsh-Ovcharov in Paris 1988, p. 102, no. 32, believed that the scene was painted from the Île des Ravageurs, but that is improbable, because there were hardly any trees there, as can be seen from F 291 JH 1314. *Bank of the Seine* could also have been painted from a boat, but that is unlikely, since there is no evidence that Van Gogh ever did that.
3 The bank with the trees behind it looks very much like the one in a view of the Seine by Seurat (private collection); Welsh-Ovcharov believed that both works are of the bank by the Île des Ravageurs (Paris 1988, no. 107, p. 284), but see note 2 above.
4 As done in De la Faille 1970, p. 144, no. 293, which was followed by other authors.
5 These included unprepared *carton* (cat. 85) and canvases that were occasionally very finely woven (cat. 87) and primed with a thin and lean lead white-based ground (cats. 86, 88-90, 94).
6 See F 315 JH 1320 and F 311 JH 1325, for example.



106 Bank of the Seine

The brushstrokes are often uniform in colour, and the same colours are used throughout the painting, indicating colours used straight from the tube, as paint cross-sections confirm. For example, pure emerald green was used for the tops of the trees, and strokes of pure chrome yellow in the bank, the foliage and the water. Some of the tube paints consist of mixtures of various pigments. In the foliage, for instance, there is a light, sunny green mixed with emerald green, chrome yellow and lead white. That mixture would undoubtedly have been put together by the manufacturer, and paint samples show that both the pure emerald green and chrome yellow and the mixed, 'sunny' green were filled out with gypsum, although of a different kind in each case. That in the emerald green has fine rounded particles, whereas in the chrome yellow it has needle-shaped crystals.[7] Only the latter kind is found in the mixed green, which shows that Van Gogh did not mix that colour himself with his tube of emerald green, because then it would have contained rounded particles.

Van Gogh began using chrome yellow a great deal in the summer of 1886, at a time when his colleagues were increasingly avoiding it because it discoloured – something that Van Gogh only became aware of later.[8] In *Bank of the Seine* it has turned a greenish brown colour at the picture surface near the riverbank and the tree on the left. The pink and wine-red strokes in the water and the treetops also lost intensity as time passed, as can be seen from a stroke of a more intense hue that was covered by the frame and was thus protected from the action of light.

Van Gogh gave his landscapes a sunny look not only with fresh colours but also by making skilful use of the white ground. It was left visible between the loose brushstrokes in *Bank of the Seine* (p. 109, fig. 20, and p. 151, fig. 9). However, the fibres of the canvas now have a greyish look due to oxidation and penetration of the wax-resin used to line the canvas. Because the lead white ground is so thin, these dark, grey fibres are clearly visible in the picture surface, reducing the original luminous effect.

There is great variety in the brushstrokes and paint consistency to describe the various elements of the scene.[9] The foliage and riverbank consist mainly of short licks, while the water was painted with long strokes to suggest the flow of a current. This part of the painting most closely resembles the Neo-Impressionist approach, with its many densely packed, bright strokes. The impasto is fairly exceptional, and suffered very little from the subsequent lining. In order to reinforce the sense of recession into depth Van Gogh painted the trees and the part of the riverbank on the right with thick paint, but he gave the trees further off far less texture so that the closest passage protrudes forward. The paint at the bottom of the bank has been pulled up with the brush into small buttery tufts. Van Gogh did this with a kind of dancing motion of the brush, tugging the paint into peaks, with threads extending from one brushstroke to the next. Long white strings of paint were used in the water to suggest reflections. Van Gogh also pulled the paint up a little in the clouds, but there it seems that he mainly used his fingers, as he did to dab the blue of the sky, giving it a more airy look.[10]

7 The gypsum particles look needle-shaped in the cross-section. No preparation was made for incident light microscopy.
8 He mentions it in letters 588 and 595, both written in Arles. See pp. 132, 133. See also Monico *et al.* 2011.
9 On this see also Hendriks 2008, pp. 225, 226.
10 See also cat. 90, and note 13 in that entry.

PROVENANCE

1887-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1930-37 on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; 1962 Vincent van Gogh Foundation (ratified in 1982); 1962-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

LITERATURE

Bonger 1890, no. 47bis [Bord de la seine (8)]; Druet 1920, no. 20100; De la Faille 1928, vol. I, pp. 84, 85, vol. 2, pl. LXXIX; De la Faille 1939, p. 277, no. 379; Leprohon 1964, p. 414; De la Faille 1970, pp. 144, 147, 622; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 124, note 44, 157, 233; Hulsker 1977, pp. 278, 280, 283; Hulsker 1980, pp. 278, 280, 283; Amsterdam 1987, p. 332, no. 1.156; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 87; Paris 1988, pp. 102, 103, no. 32; Tokyo 1995, pp. 60, 61, 122, no. 6; Hulsker 1996, pp. 278, 280, 283; Larsson 1996, p. 117; Martigny 2000, p. 294, no. 29; Hendriks/Van Tilborgh 2001 I; Stockholm/Copenhagen 2002-03, p. 94; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 52, 53, 55, 69, 73, note 56; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 86, 285, 306; Passariano 2009-10, p. 330, no. 128.

EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam I, no. 68 [Dfl. 850]; 1908 Paris, no. 24 [Ffr. 2,800]; 1908 Munich, no. 15 (Dfl. 1,100); 1908 Dresden, no. 15 [Dfl. 1,100]; 1908 The Hague & Amsterdam, no cat. known, no. 18; 1908 Berlin II, no cat. known [Dfl. 1,200]; 1909 Berlin, no cat. [Dfl. 1,200]; 1909-10 Munich, no. 7, Frankfurt am Main, Dresden & Chemnitz, no cat. known [Dfl. 2,000]; 1910 Berlin, no. 27 [DM. 2,500]; 1911 Frankfurt am Main, no cat. known; 1914 Antwerp, no. 56; 1914 Cologne & Hamburg, no cat. known; 1914 Berlin, no. 32; 1920 Venice, no. 31? [possibly cat. 107]; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 35? [possibly cat. 107]; 1930 Amersfoort, no cat. known; 1930 Amsterdam, no. 10; 1930 Hilversum, no cat. known?; 1932 Manchester, no. 14; 1948 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 72; 1972 Amsterdam I, no. 118; 1988 Paris, no. 32; 1995 Tokyo, no. 6; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 30; 2000 Martigny, no. 29; 2002-03 Stockholm & Copenhagen, no. 102; 2009-10 Passariano, no. 128; 2010-11 Tokyo, Fukuoka & Nagoya, no. 65.

107
By the Seine

Paris, mid-May-late July 1887
Oil on canvas
49.2-49.4 x 65.2-65.3 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 55 V/1962
F 299 JH 1254

It is not known where Van Gogh painted this view of the Seine with a man out walking along a row of linden trees. A tall and a short factory chimney visible across the river have been taken as rudimentary identifications of the heavily industrialised Clichy or Saint-Ouen, but since there were also factories near Courbevoie and Asnières those villages could be the setting just as well.[1] There is no bridge or island in sight, so one wonders whether this is not a view of a stretch of the river between Suresnes and Clichy.[2] There is a protruding green passage beyond the row of trees on the left, as if there is a bend in the Seine there.[3]

Van Gogh made an underdrawing, still partly visible to the naked eye, in which he marked the left side of the row of trees, drew a straight horizon line and sketched in parts of the composition, including the curve of the river, some shadows under the trees, the waterline on the far side of the river, and the outlines of the buildings and woods on the horizon. He also traced a standard *figure* 4 perspective frame on the left (33 x 24 cm), the right-hand edge of which is just in front of the strolling man in the middle of the picture, as can be seen in the infrared reflectogram (fig. 107a).[4] Van Gogh evidently found the perspective of the left-hand part of the scene, where the river bends and the tree trunks are packed closer together in the distance, too complicated to tackle without his trusty aid. He would have drawn the perspective frame and the composition lines in graphite, but he used a softer drawing material, probably charcoal, for shadows in the tree trunks and to outline the green riverbank.

The scene was painted swiftly but was left unfinished. This is particularly noticeable at the horizon, where the narrow passage between the water and the sky is very sketchy indeed. The edges of the riverbank and the water are described very rudimentarily, all of which suggests that this is a *plein-air* study which Van Gogh intended to work up back in the studio but never got around to. Like other river views from his time in Asnières, the airy brushwork is very reminiscent of Monet's.[5] Theo had just decided, in May 1887, to exhibit Monet's work in his gallery, so it is not impossible that the French artist's oeuvre served as an example for Van Gogh's efforts to get more sunlight into his landscapes.[6] That is not very likely, though, because he was guided not so much by artistic models after his experiments with Pointillism and *à l'essence* painting, but by nature. To put it another way: he selected his solutions to artistic problems from the subjects themselves, and by now he had a large arsenal from which to choose.

The open technique of this painting makes its technical structure easy to reconstruct. Van Gogh only used a few colours, which appear at first sight to be virtually identical to those in *Square Saint-Pierre at sunset* (cat. 101) – mainly dark and light blue, green, yellow ochre, pale yellow and a little organic red here and there. Most of the paint was used straight from the tube in both canvases, with the colours being

1 In the latter case Van Gogh was on the south bank of the Seine, in the former the north bank, which is always what has been suspected in the literature. Leprohon 1964, pp. 413, 414, believed that the picture was painted between Courbevoie and the Pont de Clichy, but later narrowed that down to Asnières (Leprohon 1972, p. 353), which was adopted by Welsh-Ovcharov in Paris 1988, p. 132, no. 47.
2 It was called 'Bord de Seine à Asnières' ('By the Seine at Asnières' in the 1890 inventory of Theo's collection (Bonger 1890, no. 87), so there is no reason to suspect that it was painted anywhere else.
3 That, too, is of no help in identifying the location. The problem is that this passage can also be interpreted as an island lying close to the bank, with the water to the left of it not being depicted, possibly because it was barely visible from Van Gogh's position.
4 For the characteristics of the canvas support see Table 3.5, no. 44.
5 In letter 743 Van Gogh wrote that he had seen part of the collection of the baritone Jean Baptiste Faure (1830-1914), who owned many works by Monet and Sisley, at 'a framer's shop in rue Lafitte', but it is no longer possible to say which works they were.
6 Letter from Theo van Gogh to Elisabeth van Gogh, 15 May 1887 (b 912).



107 By the Seine

107a Infrared reflectogram of cat. 107.



placed beside and on top of each other with loose strokes. He only mixed them with white now and then. He began by painting the light foreground and then worked on the water and the sky before turning to the tree trunks, foliage, stroller and details on the horizon.

The repetition of this limited palette in the different parts of the painting unifies the scene. The blues of the sky are echoed in the water and the shaded passages in the sandy path. The pink paint of the tree trunks was also used in the foliage and the road in the foreground. Van Gogh allowed the lead white ground to play its full part in the finished picture in order to achieve a luminous, sunny effect. It is particularly visible between the spontaneous brushstrokes in the sandy path, water and sky. It was for the same reason that he worked from the brightest light to the dark, as can be seen in the trees, where he first painted the sunlit foliage with yellow-green strokes before turning to pink and finally dark green and blue for the colourful, cool shadows of the leaves. He added impasted light strokes to suggest the dazzling sunlight on the road. They literally reflect the light and bring this part of the road forward.

There is some local discolouration. The cochineal in the pink paint has faded a little, and ageing has given the lead white ground a yellowish cast, partly destroying the intended effect of bright sunlight. That is particularly true in the sandy road, where the light, impasted strokes are now less effective as well, since dirt and remnants of varnish have built up in the deeper troughs. Nevertheless, *By the Seine* is still a sunny picture, although it is a little difficult to say whether it was painted in the spring or the summer. The former seems more likely, given the similarities in colour to *Square Saint-Pierre at sunset* (cat. 101), which dates from May 1887.[7]

The Dutch artist Richard Roland Holst selected this picture from Theo's collection for the first presentation of Van Gogh's work in northern Europe, the 1893 *Frie Udstilling* (Free Exhibition) in Copenhagen, where a critic singled it out for its 'light, airy tones'.[8]

7 De la Faille 1970, suggested the early summer, as did Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 233. Hulsker 1996, p. 280, on the other hand, felt that the spring was more likely.

8 For the quotation see Merete Bodelsen in Copenhagen 1984-85, no. 54. The remark was made by the critic T. Thorup in the *Aarhus Amtstidende* of 5 May 1893. It is known that the selection was made by Roland Holst from a letter that he wrote to Jo van Gogh-Bonger in February 1893 (b 1241).

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Bonger 1890, no. 87 [Bord de Seine à Asnières (1887) (15)]; Druet 1920, no. 20095; Bremmer 1927, vol. 3, p. 20, no. 20; De la Faille 1927, ill. p. 83; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 86, vol. 2, pl. LXXXII; De la Faille 1939, p. 279, no. 383; Leprohon 1964, pp. 413, 414; London 1968-69, p. 66, no. 80; De la Faille 1970, pp. 148, 149, 623; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 191, 233; Hulsker 1977, pp. 278, 280; Hulsker 1980, pp. 278, 280, 281; Amsterdam 1987, p. 332, no. 1.157; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 87; Paris 1988, pp. 132, 133, no. 47; Kyoto/Tokyo 1992, pp. 64, 65, no. 4; Hulsker 1996, pp. 278, 280; Larsson 1996, p. 117; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 119, 124; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 67; Seoul 2007-08, p. 245; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 89, 286, 306.

Exhibitions
1893 Copenhagen, no. 172 [Dkr. 375]; 1896-97 Paris, no cat. [Ffr. 400]; 1904 Groningen, no cat. known [Dfl. 650]; 1905 Amsterdam I, no. 41 [Dfl. 850]; 1905 Hamburg, no. 42 [Dfl. 950]; 1905 Dresden, no. 38; 1905 Berlin II, no cat.; 1906 Vienna, no. 36 (for sale); 1908 Paris, no. 21 [Ffr. 3,000]; 1908 Munich, no. 3 (Dfl. 1,200); 1908 Dresden, no. 3 [Dfl. 1,200]; 1908 Frankfurt am Main, no. 6 (for sale); 1908 Zürich, no. 3; 1908 The Hague & Amsterdam, no cat. known, no. 20 [Dfl. 1,800]; 1908 Berlin II, no cat. known [Dfl. 2,000]; 1909 Berlin, no cat. [Dfl. 2,000]; 1911 Amsterdam, no. 16 [Dfl. 3,500]; 1911-12 Hamburg, no cat. known [DM.? 2,500]; 1911-12 Bremen, no cat.; 1912 Dresden & Breslau, no. 41 (not for sale); 1914 Mons, no. 92?; 1920 Venice, no. 31? [possibly cat. 106]; 1925 The Hague, no cat.?; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 35? [possibly cat. 106]; 1927 Paris, no cat.; 1928-29 Hanover, Munich & Leipzig, no cat., no. 7, no cat. known; 1929 Utrecht, no. 15 [not for sale]; 1930 London, no. 8; 1930 Amsterdam, no. 11; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 51; 1947 Groningen, no. 33; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 77; 1952 Enschede, no. 33; 1952 Eindhoven, no. 31; 1953 The Hague, no. 75; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 77; 1955 Antwerp, no. 185; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 96; 1956 Breda, no. 89; 1956 Leeuwarden, no. 17; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 32; 1968-69 London, no. 80; 1971-72 Paris, no. 32; 1984-85 Copenhagen, no. 54; 1985-86 Niigata, Iwaki, Shimonoseki, Amagasaki & Tokyo, no. 4; 1988 Paris, no. 47; 1992 Kyoto & Tokyo, no. 4; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2007-08 Seoul, unnumbered; 2009 Basel, no. 16.

108
The bridge at Courbevoie

Paris, mid-May-late July 1887
Oil on canvas
32.0 x 40.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 86 V/1962
F 304 JH 1326

This small painting is of the bridge linking the Île de la Grande Jatte with the village of Courbevoie.[1] It was built between 1870 and 1878 and consisted of two abutments with iron sections in between, as shown more clearly in a later photograph (fig. 108a).[2] Seurat had already depicted the bridge (fig. 108b), and although there is not the slightest stylistic influence it is interesting to learn that Van Gogh had seen that painting at the third Les Indépendants exhibition, which was held from 26 March to 3 May 1887.[3] The Pointillist painted the bridge from the low bank of the Île de la Grande Jatte, and Van Gogh chose the same position, but closer to the bridge and from a higher vantage point.

The view is towards the northwest, with the bank of the Seine on the right and the roofs of a few houses in Courbevoie in the background. The trees on the left are horse chestnuts, and there is a poplar in the middle of the scene. There are three people standing on the bridge and two rowing boats heading downstream. This spot has changed out of all recognition today, because the old bridge was replaced in 1965-66, but the angle of view can be reconstructed with the aid of the house in the middle, which is the only one to have survived (fig. 108c).

There are white and orange dots in the foliage of the chestnuts on the left, but it is difficult to say whether they are meant to be blossoms or simply Van Gogh's attempts to enliven the greenery. This is not as sunny a scene as *Bank of the Seine* (cat. 106), but it is not clear that it should therefore be dated to the spring.[4] The streaky, multicoloured strokes are reminiscent of those in Van Gogh's *Restaurant de la Sirène at Asnières* (Paris, Musée d'Orsay), which has traditionally been dated to the summer.[5] In the absence of any firm clues we have decided to place this painting between mid-May and late July 1887 as well, when we know that Van Gogh was working in Asnières.[6]

The bridge is painted on a quite loosely woven, standard *figure* 6 canvas with a commercial double ground consisting of a layer of calcium carbonate with a little lead white beneath a thinner layer of lead white with a little calcium carbonate (Table 3.4, no. 18). That kind of ground has only been found in *Piles of French novels* among the paintings examined for this study (cat. 134).[7] The ground of *The bridge at Courbevoie* is thin and lean, and the chalk-based underlayer might be expected to further increase its wicking power to some extent.[8] Van Gogh chose to use absorbent canvases, both primed (cat. 106) and unprimed ones (F 354 JH 1270, for example), for other *plein-air* studies, perhaps for their effect of speeding up the drying process (on which see cat. 106) as well as producing a relatively matt picture surface.[9]

Van Gogh used a standard *figure* 6 (41 x 33 cm) perspective frame for this painting, and since it was the same size as the canvas he only traced the inner edges. He usually drew his perspective frames with graphite or charcoal, but here he used a

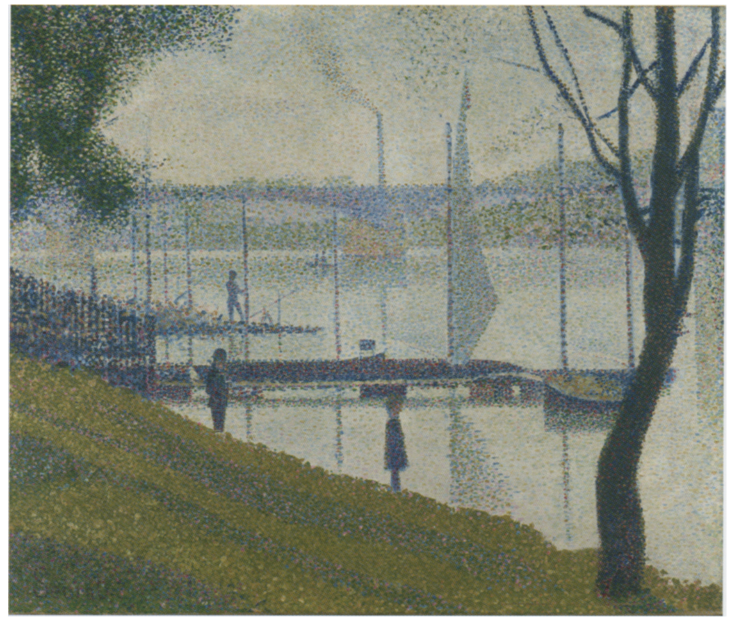
1 The road on both banks is called boulevard Bineau, and the bridge is known by both that name and the name of the village. Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov was the first to identify the spot and passed that information on to the editors of De la Faille 1970, p. 150, no. 304, who then called the painting *The Pont de la Grande Jatte*. That is not incorrect, strictly speaking, but the names Pont Bineau or Pont de Courbevoie were more common at the time (figs. 108a, 108b), and we have decided to use the latter.
2 See the unpublished and undated manuscript by Pierre Richard, *Van Gogh et les sites de la banlieue parisienne*, which is preserved in the Van Gogh Museum.
3 For the Seurat see De Hauke 1961, pp. 134, 135, no. 178. It was exhibited as no. 442, *Le pont de Courbevoie*.
4 De la Faille 1970, p. 150, no. 304, dated it to the summer of 1887, and that has been followed by later authors.
5 F 312 JH 1253. There are two other river views with a bridge as the main subject: F 301 JH 1327 and F 240 JH 1268. They are larger, so may be later than this small study.
6 See cat. 105.
7 The same layer is found in portrait studies from Nuenen which Van Gogh recycled in 1887 (cats. 99-101, 129; on this see cat. 101).
8 As discussed on p. 105, the absorbency of artists' canvas was influenced by many factors, and it is difficult to gauge the precise working properties of those used by Van Gogh. In this case, for example, it is not known whether an emulsion binder of oil and glue was used for the first layer with calcium carbonate and some lead white, which would make it more absorbent than oil alone. Callen 2000, p. 56, gives an example of a canvas preparation, probably lead white in oil on calcium carbonate in glue, supplied by the colourman Hardy Alan, which is stamped *toile absorbante* on the reverse.
9 On the Neo-Impressionists' preference for a matt surface see Callen 2000, pp. 209-11.



108 The bridge at Courbevoie



108a Postcard of the Pont Bineau, Courbevoie. Private collection.



108b Georges Seurat, *The bridge at Courbevoie*, 1886-87. London, The Courtauld Gallery.



108c Photograph of the bridge at Courbevoie, December 2003.

bright red paint consisting of a tube mixture of vermilion and red lead.[10] The painted lines, which are particularly visible at top left, are dotted, so the brush was evidently not in constant contact with the canvas (p. 126, fig. 50). The horizontal axis is also marked, but the diagonals are missing, so the point of intersection is as well. Van Gogh used the frame solely to establish the boundaries of the scene, as he usually did, and not as an aid to reconstructing the scene in accordance with the laws of perspective. The bridge, which is foreshortened, is consequently far from accurate. The three arches between the stone abutments appear to consist of separate segments instead of forming an integral, diagonal structure, and the fact that the figures in the foreground boat are smaller than those standing further off on the bridge is also incorrect.

The bridge at Courbevoie has much in common with *Bank of the Seine* (cat. 106). Both examine the effects of sunlight on flowing water, and both were created in a single swift session, with Van Gogh working on different parts of the scene in turn. The paint was applied with both firm and loose strokes, some of which overlap, but the ground is left visible here and there – in the water under the bridge, for example. The canvas was actually left largely uncovered in the riverbank on the right, and as in the other river scene Van Gogh used thick, almost 'dry' paint from which he probably first soaked out the surplus medium with blotting paper or another absorbent material. That, combined with the semi-absorbent ground, gave him a matt picture surface which, since it literally reflected the light, contributed to the

10 On this see p. 126.

effect of dazzling sunlight. That is reinforced by the 'dry' paint grazing across the nubs of the thinly grounded canvas. The brushwork is varied, as it is in *Bank of the Seine* (cat. 106), but the parallel streaks are now not restricted to the water. They are also in the sky and the bridge, making *The bridge at Courbevoie* far more of a Neo-Impressionist work than the other one.

The palette is more varied than that of *Bank of the Seine*, and Van Gogh attenuated the colours with white in order to get pastel hues. In the sky, for instance, pale pink and blue strokes mix to form purple, with pale yellow forming a contrast. There are complementary contrasts elsewhere too: blue and orange in the bridge and the water, and red and green in the row of trees. Unfortunately, the colours have lost some of their brightness over time due to dirt and varnish sinking into the light ground, robbing it of its luminosity. Van Gogh followed his usual practice in 1887 of using cochineal on a tin substrate for the figures in the boats. The thick strokes have become paler and display the deep cracks that are so common when this paint ages.

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
Bonger 1890, no. 87ter [Pont d'Asnières (6)]; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 87, vol. 2, pl. LXXXIII; De la Faille 1939, p. 278, no. 382; De la Faille 1970, pp. 150, 623; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 124, note 44, 157, 186, 233, 242; Hulsker 1977, pp. 292, 295, 298; Hulsker 1980, pp. 290, 292, 298; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 166, 167, 334, no. 1.167; Thomson 1987, p. 17; Kyoto/Tokyo 1992, pp. 70, 71, no. 7; Hulsker 1996, pp. 288, 292, 298; Martigny 2000, pp. 293, 294, no. 28; Kochi etc. 2002, p. 288, no. 66; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 119, 123, 124; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 53, 65; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 84, 286, 306; Passariano 2009-10, pp. 329, 330, no. 127.

EXHIBITIONS
1905 Amsterdam 1, no. 38 [Dfl. 450]; 1928-29 Hanover, Munich & Leipzig, no cat., no. 8, no cat. known; 1929 Utrecht, no. 16 [not for sale]; 1930 Amersfoort, no cat. known; 1930 London, no. 22; 1932 Cologne, no cat. known; 1932 Manchester, no. 17; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 78; 1950 Hilversum, no. 19; 1957-58 Stockholm, no. 109, Luleå, Kiruna, Umeå, Östersund, Sandviken & Gothenburg, no cat. known; 1958 La Louvière, unnumbered; 1971-72 Paris, no. 33; 1991 Nagoya, Nara & Hiroshima, no. 49; 1992 Kyoto & Tokyo, no. 7; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 29; 2000 Martigny, no. 28; 2002 Kochi, Utsunomiya, Kyoto & Tokyo, no. 66; 2009-10 Passariano, no. 127.

109
Path in the woods

Paris, mid-May-mid-July 1887
Oil on canvas
45.3 x 37.7 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 80 V/1962
F 309 JH 1315

Van Gogh painted six related woodland scenes on his excursions to Asnières (cats. 109, 111-13, figs. 111a, 113a), four of which are now in the Van Gogh Museum. All are of a dense wood with the sunlight playing across the leaves and casting fanciful shadows on the overgrown trunks of the trees. The subjects of most of them have been described as undergrowth, but that does not always do them justice. They show a path running through the middle of an old, dense copse (cat. 109); a view in a wood with what are probably robinias in the foreground (cat. 111); a birch copse with a young horse chestnut on the right (cat. 112); a meadow with a copse including young birches in the background (fig. 111a); the edge of a wood with a dense copse in the background (fig. 113a); and two trees and a bramble bush on the edge of a wood (cat. 113). There are no topographical clues as to the location of any of them, but it is very conceivable that they were painted in the wooded area on the south bank of the Seine or on one of the islands in the river.

The dates of all these canvases vary. Two can be dated from the vegetation depicted. There are poppies and buttercups in the grass in *Meadow by the edge of a wood* (fig. 111a), so it was almost certainly painted in the period June to mid-July. The bramble bush in *Undergrowth* (cat. 113) has red berries, so would have been made in July. The other works can be dated from their supports. It is known that Van Gogh was well-supplied with materials when he embarked on his campaign in Asnières (see cat. 106), but that came to an end in the middle of July 1887 when he got into financial difficulties again and had to revert to using supports other than ready-prepared linen (cats. 114, 116-20). Four of the six woodland scenes are painted on top of rejected works (cats. 111-13, fig. 113a), so date from the second half of July. He did not use old, recycled canvases for *Path in the woods* (cat. 109) or *Meadow by the edge of a wood* (fig. 111a), so it can be assumed that they were made between May and mid-July, when he was still free of such prosaic cares.

Path in the woods was probably the first of these woodland scenes. It differs from the others in several respects. It is on a loosely woven, *figure* 8 canvas of not very good quality that was first cut to size, then stretched and given a double ground of calcium carbonate with a layer of lead white on top (Table 3.3, no. 6). The latter fits in with the light grounds of the *plein-air* studies that Van Gogh made in and around Asnières (cats. 105-08). The other woodland scenes differ in being on a substrate with a warm mid-tone (cats. 111-13, figs. 111a, 113a).

Van Gogh had to apply his paint swiftly in order to capture the effect of the changing light in *Path in the woods*, so he first made a detailed underdrawing. The fine lines, probably graphite, are partly visible to the naked eye, as well as in infrared light. They define the tree trunks and some of the patches of light absolutely precisely. The scene was then painted in a single session, as can be deduced from the wet-into-wet brushwork. Van Gogh began with thin paints



109 Path in the woods

and gradually thickened them until eventually there was a dense network of strokes that had been applied so rapidly that occasionally the paint could be dragged easily from one spot to the next, leaving trails.

The palette is limited, with blue, yellow and green predominating, and just a few orange and pinkish strokes by the path and in the treetops as contrasts. Van Gogh started out by using a mixture of relatively transparent pigments – zinc yellow and French ultramarine[1] – for the initial thin and translucent lay-in. The various shades of green were obtained with the direct or optical mixing of those two pigments.

It was probably the choice of subject that made Van Gogh depart from his way of creating light with the aid of the light ground (see, for example, cats. 105-08). The main tone in a wood is naturally a dark one, and the sunlight is restricted to a few patches, so it was more convenient to add the light accents at the very end instead of reserving them from the outset. Van Gogh ultimately applied them with impasted white and light blue accents, and then suggested the foliage at the right edge by scratching in the wet paint to reveal the white ground here and there.

The effect of light shining through the leaves is not convincing, though, and there is little sense of space, despite the fact that the path heads downhill at an angle. The flat, decorative look predominates, and that is not entirely due to the use of the same series of colours but also to the lack of variety in the brushwork. The short strokes do stand out against the twisting lines of the tree trunks and the oblique strokes in the path, but they are not differentiated enough. Van Gogh's main concern seems to have been to make a spontaneous record of what he saw, and he was only able to introduce more refinement in the five later studies of similar subjects (see cats. 111-13).

1 This is the first time that we encountered zinc yellow in the works examined; see further p. 132.

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
Bonger 1890, no. 56 [Sous-bois] or no. 85 [Sous-bois (8)]; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 88, vol. 2, pl. LXXXIV; De la Faille 1939, p. 257, no. 348; De la Faille 1970, pp. 152, 623; Welsh-Ovcharov 1971 II, p. 41; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 124, note 44, 170, 171, 233; Hulsker 1977, pp. 292, 295; Hulsker 1980, pp. 290, 295; Amsterdam 1987, p. 335, no. 1.170; Rome 1988, no. 24; Hulsker 1996, pp. 288, 290, 295; Amsterdam 2003, p. 265, no. 130; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 63; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 96, 306.

EXHIBITIONS
1905 Amsterdam I, no. 58 [Dfl. 750]; 1909-10 Munich, no. 19, Frankfurt am Main, Dresden & Chemnitz, no cat. known [Dfl. 2,000] [not in Chemnitz]; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 43; 1936 Batavia, no. 13; 1938 London, no. 25; 1938 Eindhoven, no. 45; 1947 Groningen, no. 37; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 81; 1955 Antwerp, no. 186; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 97; 1971-72 Paris, no. 34; 1988 Rome, no. 24; 1996 Ahlen, Neuss & Bonn, unnumbered [only Ahlen]; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2003 Amsterdam I, no. 130; 2008-09 Marseille, no. 55.

110
Wheatfield with partridge

Paris, mid-June-mid-July 1887
Oil on canvas
53.7 x 65.2 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 197 V/1962
F 310 JH 1274

It was once thought that this was a painting of a reedbed, but this was shown to be incorrect by the wildflowers in the foreground: poppies, cornflowers and camomile, which are typically found on arable land.[1] The waving plants bent over to the left by the wind are wheat stalks, as can be seen from their short, cylindrical ears. It is not known whether Van Gogh was inspired by scenes of wheatfields by artists of the School of Barbizon (fig. 110a), but he cleverly adopted a low vantage point, making the picture so intimate that it is almost personal. It may look timeless, but in fact it captures a specific moment in the cycle of life on the land, because the stubble in the foreground shows that reaping has just begun.

Jo van Gogh-Bonger, Theo's widow, took the bird flying up from the field to be a lark. The painting had pride of place in the drawing room of her apartment in Amsterdam (fig. 110b), and was one of the five Paris works that she refused to sell, which suggests that she liked it above all for the bird,[2] for she included its name in her official title of the painting, and that was how it was always known.[3]

The lark was and is the supreme symbol of the Romantics' experience of nature, and that gave the scene a lofty connotation for viewers.[4] For example, Hendrik Bremmer, the lecturer on art and Van Gogh expert, wrote that the painting looked 'like a song sung in all its beauty by a bird out of a primal urge'.[5] However, the identification of the bird as a lark is incorrect. Its size and dark head show that it is the larger partridge, which flies close to the ground and feeds off the seeds of wildflowers. It seems to have been startled by the viewer or the reapers, which heightens the *trompe l'oeil* effect. It also adds a sense of depth to a scene in which there is very little perspective.

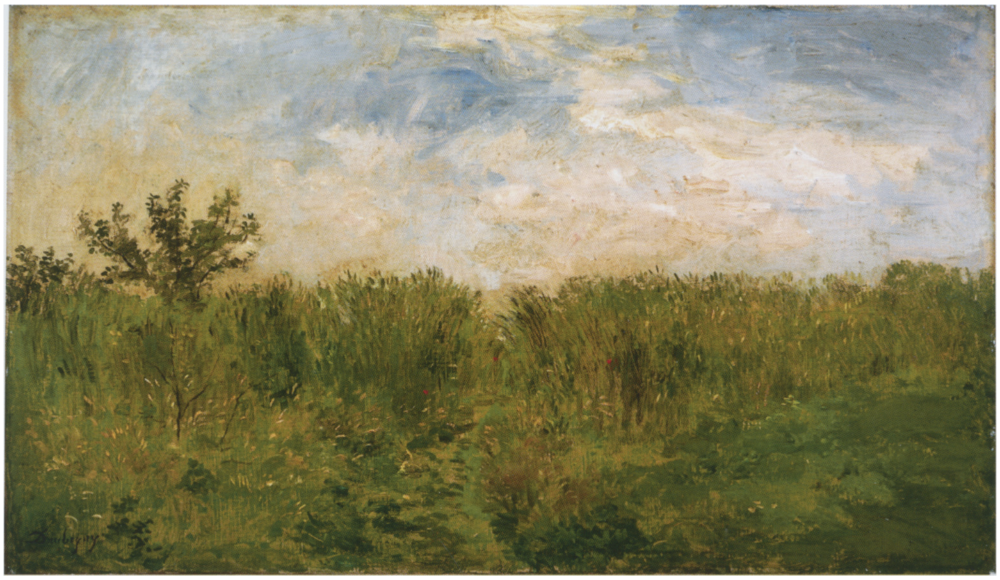
Van Gogh used a loosely woven *figure* 15 canvas (54 x 65 cm) that was sized after being stretched on the working-size frame and given a chalk ground topped with a pinkish layer of lead white mixed with carbon black, umber and ochre (Table 3.3, no. 8). The composition can be divided into three horizontal zones: the sky, the wheat and the foreground stubble. Van Gogh started by tracing a perspective frame, probably with graphite, to establish the parameters of the extremely simple scene. It is visible to the naked eye (fig. 110c) in a few places as well as showing up in the infrared reflectogram, and is a standard *paysage* 12 frame, measuring approximately 46 x 60 cm, that was placed in the middle of the canvas. The top edge of the wheat coincides with the horizontal axis of the frame, and Van Gogh painted the partridge fluttering skywards just to the left and above the point where the wires of the frame intersect (although only the left diagonal is visible), in other words precisely at the traditional vanishing point.

He first applied thin layers of turquoise and pink respectively beneath the wheat and the foreground, allowing the light-coloured ground to show through. He worked the scene up on top of this paint while it was still wet, using loose, very

1 See note 2 for the reedbed.
2 Jo van Gogh-Bonger sent the landscape to one of the first Dutch exhibitions of her brother-in-law's work. The Amsterdam art dealers Buffa en Zonen put ten works from her collection on display in February-March 1892, at the same time as an exhibition in Rotterdam. They included 'a field with reeds that truly wave' ('een veld met riet dat werkelijk wuift'; Anonymous, 'Vincent van Gogh', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 16 February 1892), which would have been *Wheatfield with partridge*.
3 Jo van Gogh-Bonger called it 'Wheatfield w[ith] lark' ('Korenveld m[et] leeuwerik') in her handwritten list for Amsterdam 1905 (b 5422). That was the title used in the exhibition catalogue (Amsterdam 1905, no. 62), and it was adopted universally thereafter.
4 For the symbolism of the lark in the 19th century see Lemaire 2004, pp. 48-56. Lemaire's book stresses the importance of Shelley's poem 'To a skylark' of 1820 for the lark's reputation, so it is worth mentioning that Shelley was Jo's 'favourite poet' ('lievelingsdichter'; letter from Elisabeth van Gogh to Jo Bonger, 6 November 1885, b 3543, and Jo's reply, b 3544, 15 november 1885).
5 Bremmer 1927, vol. 3, p. 19: '[...] als een lied, hetwelk een vogeltje uit zuiveren aandrang in volle schoonheid fluit'. Several authors, among them Thomson 1987, p. 24, and Evert van Uitert in Amsterdam 1987, p. 172, considered that the painting was more than just a skilful depiction of a *plein-air* subject, basing themselves on the symbolism of what they thought was a lark.



110 Wheatfield with partridge



110a Charles-François Daubigny, *Cornfield under a stormy sky*. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.



110b Photograph of the drawing room of Jo van Gogh-Bonger's apartment at Koninginneweg 77, Amsterdam, c. 1915. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

open brushwork that left the ground visible in the sky and the underpaint in the landscape. The brushstrokes vary depending on the motif. The area of stubble was rendered with short, slightly diagonal strokes in several colours done with a fine pointed brush. Long strokes, also applied with a pointed brush, were used for the wind-tossed stalks of wheat. The paint is buttery throughout and forms thin ridges. The sky, on the other hand, was painted very thinly with a broad brush, making it recede optically and creating a sense of space. The colours are well preserved. Only in a few of the poppies did Van Gogh use the unstable red lead, with the result that the originally orange-red strokes have discoloured to a milky dark grey.[6]

This study is the only work from Van Gogh's Paris period with a distinctly rural subject, so one wonders why he was tempted into the diversion.[7] The wildflowers point to a date between mid-June and mid-July 1887, which means that the scene was painted during or shortly after the major retrospective exhibition of the work of Jean-François Millet in the Ecole des Beaux-Arts from 1 May to 20 June. Van Gogh's 'yearnings for that infinite of which the Sower, the sheaf, are the symbols'

6 See p. 134.
7 For a long time it was thought that wheat was also depicted in F 310a JH 1273 and F 317 JH 1287, but that is incorrect; it is grass in both cases. However, there are wheat sheaves in F 460 JH 1676 (p. 47, fig. 11), which is always dated to Arles but may in fact have been painted in Paris; see pp. 48, 49 and note 32 there.



110c Detail of cat. 110 showing traced horizontal line from inner edge of a perspective frame.



110d *Reaper* (F 1316 JH 858), 1885. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

[628] had not yet been satisfied in Paris, so the Millet exhibition could have made him nostalgic for country scenes, prompting him to paint this field in which reapers have already set to work.[8] It bears a resemblance to his scenes of waving wheatfields from the end of his Dutch period, although they differ by containing reapers or wheat sheaves (fig. 110d).[9] Van Gogh was still unable to paint large figures convincingly in Paris, and this painting suggests that he now believed that a detailed scene of stubble in a field was an equally effective way of depicting the rural activity of reaping.

8 Wheat sheaves are also depicted in F 460 JH 1676 (see note 7).
9 For this subject see Drawings 2, cats. 184-86, pp. 222-39, and cats. 197-202, pp. 255-60.

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Bonger 1890, no. 92 [Champs de blé (15)]; Bremmer 1927, vol. 3, pp. 18, 19, no. 18; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 88, vol. 2, pl. LXXXV; De la Faille 1939, p. 266, no. 360; Stellingwerff 1959, pp. 96, 97; Graetz 1963, pp. 57, 58; London 1968-69, p. 67, no. 83; De la Faille 1970, pp. 152, 153, 623; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 94, 95, 167, 170, 234; Hulsker 1977, pp. 278, 282, 284; Hulsker 1980, pp. 278, 282, 284; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 172, 173, 335, no. 1.172; Thomson 1987, p. 24; Paris 1988, pp. 144, 145, no. 53; Hulsker 1996, pp. 278, 282, 284; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 63; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 83, 286, 306.

Exhibitions
1892 Amsterdam, no cat.?; 1892 The Hague, no. unknown; 1905 Amsterdam I, no. 62 [not for sale]; 1911 Amsterdam, no. 26 [not for sale]; 1913 The Hague, no. 96; 1923 Amsterdam, no. 122; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 51; 1926-27 London, no. 14 [not for sale]; 1930 Amsterdam, no. 13; 1935 Amsterdam, no. 16; 1935-36 New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Cleveland, San Francisco, Kansas City, Minneapolis, Chicago & Detroit, no. 18; 1938-39 Batavia, no. 30; 1939 Surabaya, no. 7; 1939 Bandung, no cat.; 1939 San Francisco, no. 171; 1940 Cleveland, no. 21; 1940 Cambridge & New Haven, no cat.; 1940 New York, no. 5; 1941 Chapel Hill, no cat.; 1941 Boston, no cat. known; 1941 Spokane, no. 11; 1942 Dayton, unnumbered; 1942 Baltimore & Worcester, no. 8; 1942 Providence, no cat. known; 1943 Albany, Pittsburgh & Toledo, no. 4.G; 1943 Northampton, Philadelphia & Montgomery, no cat. known, no. 4.G, no cat. known; 1943 Saint Louis, no. 4.G; 1943 Springfield, no cat. known; 1943 New York, no. 15; 1943-44 Indianapolis, Cincinnati & Ottawa, no. 4.G; 1944 Montreal, no. 118; 1944 Fort Wayne, no. 4.G; 1944 New York, no. 4.G; 1944 Richmond, no cat.; 1944 Charleston, no. 4.G; 1944 Atlanta, no cat. known; 1945 New Orleans, Louisville & Syracuse, no cat. known, no. 4.G, no cat.; 1945 Toronto & Quebec, no cat. known, no. unknown; 1945 New York, no cat.; 1945 Norwich, no. 4.G.; 1946-47 Liège, Brussels & Mons, no. 56; 1947 Paris, no. 57; 1947 Geneva, no. 58; 1947 Groningen, no. 36; 1947-48 London, Birmingham & Glasgow, no. 16; 1948 Bergen & Oslo, no. 11; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 83; 1949 Middelburg, no. 13; 1949-50 New York & Chicago, no. 53; 1950 Hilversum, no. 12; 1951 Lyon & Grenoble, no. 22; 1951 Arles, no. 22; 1951-52 Nijmegen & Alkmaar, no. 8; 1952 Enschede, no. 28; 1952 Eindhoven, no. 30; 1953 Zundert, no. 13; 1953 Hoensbroek, no. 26; 1953 IJmuiden, no. 13; 1953 Assen, no. 11; 1954-55 Willemstad, no. 11; 1955 Palm Beach, Miami & New Orleans, no. 10; 1955 Antwerp, no. 189; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 98; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 25; 1957 Marseille, no. 32; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 34; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 23; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 23; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 23; 1963 Sheffield, no. 5; 1963 Humlebæk, no. 18; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 18; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 21; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 30; 1968-69 London, no. 83; 1969-70 Los Angeles, Saint Louis & Philadelphia, no. 18; 1970-71 Baltimore, San Francisco & New York, no. 18; 1971-72 Paris, no. 36; 1972 Bordeaux, no. 9; 1976-77 Tokyo, Kyoto & Nagoya, no. 44; 1977-78 The Hague, no cat.; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2001 Norfolk, no cat.; 2007 Bilbao, no cat.; 2008 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2009 Basel, no. 27; 2010-11 Tokyo, Fukuoka & Nagoya, no. 66.

111
Paris, second half of July 1887
Oil on canvas
46.1-46.5 x 38.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 78 V/1962
F 307 JH 1318

Underlying image: landscape (?)
After March 1886

112
Paris, second half of July 1887
Oil on canvas
46.1 x 55.2 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 66 V/1962
F 309a JH 1312

The verso of *Landscape* is by an unknown 19th-century artist which was overpainted with red-brown paint (fig. 111b)

Underlying image: indeterminate
After January 1887

111
Trees

112
Trees and undergrowth

Van Gogh painted his first woodland scene on a light ground (cat. 109), but his next four forays in the genre are on a warm mid-tone. It is a light pinkish grey in both *Undergrowth* (cat. 113) and *Trees and undergrowth* (fig. 113a), a pinkish brown in the present two works (cats. 111, 112) and possibly in *Meadow by the edge of a wood* as well (fig. 111a).[1] The pinkish brown consists of no fewer than 11 pigments, and the same mixture was used as an underlayer on the backs of works from the Nuenen period (cats. 114, 116-20, fig. 116g and perhaps fig. 116f), on which he mainly painted self-portraits.

Van Gogh applied this underpaint in order to cover up earlier scenes,[2] and in a sense his choice of a dark tone was a retrograde step, because it was completely at odds with his 'great quest' for 'sunlight' and thus had no parallel in Neo-Impressionist practice.[3] He may have chosen this colour because of the subject of the paintings, a dusky wood, but he could also have liked it for its obvious advantages. The mid-tone he chose speeds up modelling as well as the mixing of the colours, because they look exactly the same on the support as on the wooden palette.[4] Dark underlayers also help to unify a scene, as well as suggesting recession into depth, which Van Gogh employed to the full. The mid-tone always plays a part in the finished result and effortlessly links the different parts of a composition, while the toned, warm substrate also forms an excellent complementary basis for scenes largely executed in green tints.[5]

Van Gogh used a perspective frame to establish the parameters for many of his woodland scenes, though none was detected in *Path in the woods* (cat. 109) or *Undergrowth* (cat. 113), which are discussed separately for that reason.[6] Needless to say, he did not use the frame to establish the perspective in the scenes (a wood, after all, does not usually have any neatly receding lines) but to define the structure of the dense foliage. The window and the wires helped him find an interesting field of view and arrange the different parts of the composition in relation to each other.

Trees is on a standard *figure* 8 canvas, and like the majority of the woodland series was painted over another scene (Table 3.3, no. 14).[7] It is a very finely woven canvas with a double, light ground composed of a layer of calcium carbonate beneath two layers consisting mainly of lead white and some coloured pigments. The impasto brushstrokes of the first composition have worked through into the present scene, and suggest that the first painting was well-advanced, if not finished. The forms that can be made out in relief and in the X-radiograph indicate that it was a landscape, for which the canvas must have been turned 90 degrees to the left. This is

1 The ground layers of the first four works have been analysed, but that of *Meadow by the edge of a wood* (fig. 111a) has not.
2 *Meadow by the edge of a wood* (fig. 111a) has not been examined, but on the evidence of the other works it is assumed that it too conceals another painting.
3 The quotation is from a letter that Theo wrote to his sister Elisabeth van Gogh on 15 May 1887 (b 912): 'Het is zijn groot zoeken om er zonlicht in te krijgen'. The Neo-Impressionists differed from the Impressionists in that they often painted their outdoor scenes on wood, but usually chose whitewood; see Cologne etc. 2008-10, pp. 53, 194-98.
4 This question is discussed in Callen 2000, pp. 65, 66.
5 The traditional use of warm underlayers for landscapes is explained in ibid., p. 164.
6 On this see p. 126.
7 See Table 5.



111 Trees



112 Trees and undergrowth

also indicated by the large amount of light blue visible on the right and bottom turnover edges of the canvas.

The finely woven canvas, type of ground and impasto brushwork suggest that the first study was made in Asnières and was recycled later that summer. Van Gogh then traced a *figure* 6 (41 x 33 cm) perspective frame with graphite on the pinkish brown covering layer that is clearly visible with infrared reflectography. The frame was placed roughly in the middle of the canvas, a bit down towards the lower edge, with the wires intersecting in the crown of the central tree, which is flanked almost symmetrically by the two nearer the viewer.

Van Gogh did not make a detailed sketch of the scene. The frame gave him the firm point of reference he needed to lay in the composition immediately with paint. He used a thin blue for the branches of the middle tree and red lake for the tree trunks and diagonal branches, then worked with assurance on different parts of the scene with no need for corrections or improvements. Raised peaks at the end of every stroke show how swiftly he dashed away with the brush, assisted here and there by the dark underlayer. The unifying tone of the covering layer enabled him to work the scene up with loose brushwork while leaving that layer fully visible in the foreground, the tree trunks and the foliage.

The effect of space and of the light filtering through the trees is more successful in this painting than in the first woodland scene (cat. 109), chiefly because the structure of the composition is more clearly defined. The foreground is marked by a diagonal branch, while the three trees behind it are not in a row but staggered. Their positions relative to each other are emphasised by the branch extending from the tree on the right to the one on the left. The spatial structure is reinforced by the clustering of brushstrokes of the same colour. The patches of light are no longer scattered over the entire surface of the picture but are brought together in a zone just above the floor of the wood and in another at the height of the crown of the tree in the centre. The colour is more varied and there are more shades in the green. The warm, pinkish brown ground provided the necessary contrast for this, but Van Gogh strengthened it by adding some pink and red strokes at the very last moment.

Trees and undergrowth (cat. 112) was also painted over a rejected work, the subject of which cannot be made out. The many wet-into-wet, mixed colours visible around the edges of the present scene suggest that it was a finished work, and given the presence of cobalt violet it was very probably one in the *à l'essence* style that Van Gogh used from January to the middle of April 1887. That pigment only occurs in works from that period (cats. 87, 89, 90, 94), always in combination with cerulean blue, which was also found here.[8]

The first composition was painted on a very finely woven canvas that was stretched on a standard *figure* 10 frame (Table 3.8, no. 70). Van Gogh did not buy it new, for on the back of the present scene is a painting by another artist (fig. 111b) which came to light when the woodland scene was lined in 1969 after the canvas was torn in an accident.[9] Prior to this treatment 'a hard, brownish red layer of paint was removed from the reverse, revealing the unsuspected remnant of another painting'.[10] Since that view of a lake surrounded by hills was not by Van Gogh, it was no reason to abandon the planned restoration and lining.

Van Gogh removed the canvas from the frame and stretched it anew, this time

8 See Table 5.
9 Letter from W.A.L. Beeren to E.R. Meijer, 22 June 1969; see also the extract from the diary of V.W. van Gogh (b 5087), 30 July 1969.
10 Restoration report by C. van Voorst, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 18 September 1969: '[...] de achterzijde ontdaan van [een] harde bruinrode verflaag waaronder een onbekend restant van een ander schilderij bleek te zitten'.



111a *Meadow by the edge of a wood* (F 362 JH 1264), 1887. Private collection.



111b Reverse of cat. 112, photograph taken prior to the lining in 1969. Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum.

with the landscape by the unknown artist on the back. He prepared for his own scene by applying a thin whitish ground, mainly of barytes mixed with lead white and calcium carbonate, which may have been a cheap household paint, and did not size the canvas first. He then painted his own work which, as with cat. 111, he then abandoned and painted over with pinkish brown in preparation for the present scene (p. 152, fig. 11). Here, too, he traced a perspective frame on the ground, but that underdrawing can only be seen, with difficulty, with infrared reflectography. It was a standard *paysage* 12 frame (61 x 46 cm), but was larger than the canvas, which is a standard *figure* 10 (46 x 55 cm). As a result, only the inner edges of the frame were drawn, giving a window of 38 x 53 cm.

The perspective frame once again served as an aid for centring and laying out the composition. The wires intersect in the illuminated yellow passage just above the floor of the wood. Van Gogh also made use of the outlines of the actual frame, with a sturdier lilac tree trunk being placed up against its inside edge on the right. That lilac tree is repeated on a smaller scale halfway along the imaginary diagonal linking the bottom right corner of the frame with the intersection of the wires, creating a sense of depth.

This scene, too, seems to have been painted directly, without the aid of an underdrawing, with assurance and without corrections. Van Gogh set out to make this somewhat larger canvas a more finished painting, but without losing spontaneity. Green once again predominates, but unlike the preceding woodland scenes (cats. 109, 111) there is more emphasis on the complementary contrasts between yellow in the leaves and lilac in the tree trunks. Another new departure is that the foliage is suggested by a combination of short green brushstrokes and multicoloured dots of bright red and blue, with bright and pale yellow being used effectively to evoke the light flickering through the trees. The warm ground plays a part in this colour composition, although to a lesser extent than in *Trees* (cat. 111). What is striking is that Van Gogh used a far more varied palette than he had for his earlier woodland scenes and several other *plein-air* studies (cats. 106, 107, 109, 111). In the green tints, above all, one sees all sorts of mixtures of blue pigments with chrome yellow, in addition to emerald green and viridian. This creates a lively effect, which would explain why Van Gogh was prepared to try out the same manner on a larger canvas, *Meadow by the edge of a wood* (fig. 111a).[11]

11 For this painting, which also had a reddish brown *imprimatura*, see Hulshoff/Van Heugten 1994.

Cat. 111

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
Bonger 1890, no. 56 [Sous-bois] or no. 85 [Sous-bois (8)]; De la Faille 1927, ill. p. 85; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 88, vol. 2, pl. LXXXIV; De la Faille 1939, p. 258, no. 349; De la Faille 1970, pp. 150, 151, 623; Welsh-Ovcharov 1971 II, p. 41; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 124, note 44, 170, 171, 233; Hulsker 1977, pp. 292, 296; Hulsker 1980, pp. 290, 296; Amsterdam 1987, p. 334, no. 1.168; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 87; Hulsker 1996, pp. 288, 290, 296; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 119, 124; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 57, 64, 74, note 89; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 96, 285, 306.

EXHIBITIONS
1905 Amsterdam I, no. 48 [Dfl. 850]; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 40? [possibly cat. 113]; 1927 Paris, no cat.; 1928 Berlin, no. 23; 1928 Vienna, no. 13; 1928 Frankfurt am Main, no. 13; 1928-29 Hanover, Munich & Leipzig, no cat., no. 9, no cat. known; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 48; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 79; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2006-07 Amsterdam & New York, unnumbered.

Cat. 112

PROVENANCE
1887-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-after 1905 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; after 1905-29 H.C. Bonger, Amsterdam; 1929-44 E.H. Bonger, Amsterdam; 1944-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1962 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1962-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

LITERATURE
Bonger 1890, no. 88 [Sous-bois (10)]; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 88, vol. 2, pl. LXXXV [as 309bis]; De la Faille 1939, p. 256, no. 347 [F 309bis]; De la Faille 1970, pp. 152, 623; Welsh-Ovcharov 1971 II, p. 41; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 124, note 44, 170, 171, 233; Hulsker 1977, p. 292; Hulsker 1980, pp. 290, 292; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 170, 171, 335, no. 1.171; Paris 1988, pp. 106, 107, no. 34; Hulsker 1996, pp. 288, 290, 292; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 119, 124; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 52, 53, 57, 59, 61, 71, 74, notes 70, 89; Seoul 2007-08, p. 245; Van Heugten 2008, p. 43; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 97, 286, 306.

EXHIBITIONS
1905 Amsterdam I, no. 39 [Dfl. 950]; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 82 [309bis]; 1955 Antwerp, no. 187 [309b]; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 24 [309bis]; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 35; 1959 Bordeaux, no. 241; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 20; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 29; 1968-69 London, no. 82; 1971-72 Paris, no. 35; 1988 Paris, no. 34; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 33; 2003 Amsterdam II, unnumbered; 2007-08 Seoul, unnumbered.

113 Undergrowth

Paris, second half of July 1887
Oil on canvas
46.0 x 38.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 79 V/1962
F 308 JH 1313

Underlying image:
indeterminate
After January 1887

The composition of this painting and *Trees and undergrowth* (fig. 113a) differ from the woodland scenes discussed so far (cats. 109, 111, 112) in that here Van Gogh has zoomed in on his subject, as it were. Both of them are focused more on the floor of the wood, with one or two large tree trunks in the centre of the scene. They are cut off abruptly by the picture plane – a device that had fascinated Van Gogh early in his career. Back in The Hague an engraving in *The Graphic* tempted him to crop scenes in this way (fig. 113b), but that does not explain the high horizon in *Undergrowth* (cat. 113),[1] which appears to owe more to Japanese prints.

It can be assumed on the basis of the more carefully planned composition and considered brushwork that *Undergrowth* (cat. 113) was painted after *Trees and undergrowth* (fig. 113a). The bramble bush has old, bare stems from the previous year's growth protruding into the foreground. There are berries on the bush, which indicates that the painting was made in July. Since, like *Trees and undergrowth* (fig. 113a), it was painted on top of another work which Van Gogh probably regarded as a failure, we have dated it to the second half of the month, when Van Gogh was in financial difficulties and was again forced to recycle his supports (on which see cats. 105, 109).

The covering layers beneath *Trees and undergrowth* (fig. 113a) *Horse chestnut tree in blossom* (cat. 103), and *Undergrowth* (cat. 113) appear identical, and samples from the latter two works show that the light pinkish grey layer consists of lead white, coarse barytes, emerald green, French ultramarine and a fine red iron oxide (p. 109, fig. 21, p. 116, fig. 36).[2] The scene beneath *Undergrowth* could not be identified. The support is a poor-quality, gauze-like canvas of the standard *figure* 8 size, so the first scene would have been painted during Van Gogh's stay in Paris (Table 3.5, no. 38). However, the date can perhaps be pinned down more precisely. After stretching and sizing the canvas was given a very thin lead white ground containing some bone black, orange and probably ochre. Van Gogh first started working with very thin grounds of that kind after January 1887, so that was probably when the hidden scene was painted.[3]

As with *Path in the woods* (cat. 109), Van Gogh made an underdrawing for this woodland scene (fig. 113c), but it is much freer. The rapid, searching lines are very reminiscent of those under *Horse chestnut tree in blossom* (cat. 103) and *Basket of pansies* (cat. 102, fig. 102a). The drawing, which is probably in graphite, was made before the pinkish grey underlayer was completely dry, because the paint was pushed aside by the lines. The contours of the tree trunks were then indicated with thin blue paint and the horizon with thin green. The scene itself was executed with complete self-assurance in a single session with loose brushstrokes that allowed the pinkish-grey ground to make an important contribution to the finished result, most notably in the truncated trees and the floor of the wood.

1 Van Gogh took this print as the model for the composition of F 8 JH 182 (see Otterlo 2003, p. 33).
2 This paint was also found on cats. 84 and 103; see cat. 103 for its use.
3 See pp. 108, 109.



113 Undergrowth



113a *Trees and undergrowth* (F 306 JH 1317), 1887. Utrecht, Centraal Museum, Van Baaren Collection.

113b Helen Paterson, illustration in 'Innocent: a tale of modern life, by Mrs Oliphant', *The Graphic*, 11 January 1873.



PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
Bonger 1890, no. 56 [Sous-bois] or no. 85 [Sous-bois (8)]; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 88, vol. 2, pl. LXXXIV; De la Faille 1939, p. 259, no. 350; De la Faille 1970, pp. 152 [ill. upside down], 623; Welsh-Ovcharov 1971 II, p. 41; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 124, note 44, 170, 171, 233; Hulsker 1977, pp. 292, 295; Hulsker 1980, pp. 290, 295; Amsterdam 1987, p. 334, no. 1.169; Hulsker 1996, pp. 288, 290, 295; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 119, 124; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 53, 57, 61, 67, 74, notes 72, 89; Van Heugten 2008, p. 43; Vienna 2008, pp. 222, 223; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 97, 285, 306.

EXHIBITIONS
1905 Amsterdam I, no. 44 [Dfl. 800]; 1906 Rotterdam, no. 12; 1906 Middelburg, no cat.; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 40? [possibly cat. 111]; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 47; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 80; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2008 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2008 Vienna, no. 49.

114
Allotment with sunflower

Paris, second half of July 1887
Oil on canvas
43.2 x 36.2 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 4 V/1962
F 388v JH 1307

Verso of *Head of a woman*
(F 388r JH 782: fig. 114a)
May 1885

Like the self-portraits discussed below (cats. 116-20), this work is on the back of a painting made in Nuenen: a *Head of a woman* of May 1885 (fig. 114a).[1] It is of a tall sunflower in bloom in front of a fence in a green field, beyond which there is a path with a fence on the other side. A woman is standing on the path beside a shed with a sloping roof.

This work, a drawing and two more paintings are exploratory studies that Van Gogh made of the site in front of the old farmhouse belonging to the Debray family on the hill of Montmartre (figs. 114c, 114d, 115d).[2] Standing there were 'sheds surrounded by large, very yellow sunflowers', to quote from an article that Emile Bernard wrote in 1889, and this was one of them.[3] The same shed is on the far left in one of the other studies (fig. 115d), and it reappears as the building with the sloping roof in the centre of *Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette* (cat. 115), which would have been made after the exploratory studies of the site.

For *Allotment with sunflower* Van Gogh took up a position in the field behind the fence that ran parallel to the Debrays' farmhouse, as can be seen in a photograph taken by the amateur photographer and policeman Henri Daudet (1847-1926; fig. 115c). The view is to the northwest, with the smoking chimneys of the factories in Clichy on the left. Sunflowers are in bloom from the middle of July to August, but since we are fairly certain that the large painting (cat. 115) was made at the end of July and that it must have been preceded by this study, we have dated the latter approximately to the second half of the month.[4]

Van Gogh did not buy ready-prepared, stretched, standard size canvases in Nuenen but cut them to the size he wanted from a roll of prepared linen. He now applied a brownish pink ground to the back of the canvas to take the new scene (Table 3.7, no. 67).[5] The single thin layer immediately penetrated the fabric, leaving its fairly rough surface unaffected. Interestingly, as with one of the self-portraits (cat. 117), the paint of the scene itself does not extend up to the edges of the canvas, leaving a broad unpainted strip all around. Van Gogh probably used a wooden frame clamp called a *stirator*, which held loose canvases in position while they were being painted (see further cats. 116-20).[6]

Allotment with sunflower was executed spontaneously, like the other works with a pinkish brown ground (cats. 111, 112, 114, 116-20, fig. 116g). The paint was applied with assurance, wet-into-wet, without any form of underdrawing. Van Gogh first painted the large leaves of the plant and then worked the scene up alternately in the flower and its setting. The red fences and green foreground were added at the end. The palette is fairly limited. The colours were both mixed by Van Gogh and applied directly from the tube – the latter being used for the dark green outlining of the sunflower and in the grass, for example.

The paint layer is more closed than in the other landscapes with the same

1 Paintings 1, cat. 18, pp. 90, 91, 98, 99, 102, 105. Van Gogh probably sent it and other works to Theo in Paris at the beginning of the following month. On this see Van Tilborgh 1999 I, pp. 11, 12, 239.
2 For these works see cat. 115.
3 The quotation is from an article that Bernard wrote about Van Gogh in 1889 that he hoped to publish in *Le Moderniste Illustré*. It was first published and annotated by Roland Dorn in Mannheim/Amsterdam 1990, pp. 382, 383. For an integral transcription and English translation see New York 2007-08, pp. 360-65.
4 The first sunflower to bloom was officially recorded on 3 August 1887; see Relevés Météorologiques, Parc de Saint-Maur, August 1887, A 34, under Journal Météorologique, Paris, Météo France.
5 The same layer was found on the backs of paintings from Nuenen which he reused for self-portraits, and on other works. For a full list see cats. 116-20.
6 On the *stirator* see p. 103, fig. 12.



114 Allotment with sunflower

114a *Head of a woman* (F 388r JH 782), 1885. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum. Recto of cat.114.

114b Cat. 114 before conservation in 2003.







114c *Shed with sunflowers* (F 1411 JH 1305), 1887. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



114d *Shed in Montmartre* (F 264a JH 1306), 1887. San Francisco, Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, bequest of Frederick J. Hellman.

pinkish brown underlayer (cats. 111, 112, 111a, 114), but the warm tone of that ground does show through well, especially in the thin grey-blue strip across the horizon, where Van Gogh seems to have rubbed the paint off a little to the left. A green leaf that was partly painted on top of the pinkish brown and partly over the light sky shows the impact of the warm ground, for the green is considerably brighter in the latter passage. Cochineal on a tin substrate was used in the fence and the sunflower head, and as in so many other Paris paintings it has become brittle and cracked where thickly applied (see cats. 84, 111, 115, 124, 131, 133, 137).

In the case of three other double-sided works (cats. 118-20) it is known that the sides painted in Nuenen were covered with sturdy cardboard backings at some stage, and it seems that *Allotment with sunflower* was also concealed by one for a long time. There is no documentary evidence for this, but there appear to be traces of glue on the picture surface which seem to point in that direction. The scene with the sunflower was exhibited in 1905, so the cardboard must have been attached after that. It had been removed again by 1931, because in that year the number '11' (upside down) was carefully stamped on the scene in red. The study of a head on the front was exhibited under that number in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam that year.[7]

The edges were strengthened in 1958 by gluing strips of linen to them, and the canvas was put on a stretcher, which concealed part of *Allotment with sunflower*, mainly the unpainted edges (fig. 114b).[8] That striplining became very brittle in the course of time and was endangering the condition of the canvas, so it was removed in 2003. Like all the other double-sided canvases, the painting is now clamped in a frame so that both scenes are visible.

7 Paintings 1, cat. 18, p. 105.
8 Report by C. van Voorst, restorer, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Bonger 1890, no. 32 [Tourne-sol (à Montmartre)]; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 108, vol. 2, pl. cv [as 388recto]; De la Faille 1939, p. 217, no. 282 [F 388]; De la Faille 1970, pp. 176, 626; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 232; Hulsker 1977, pp. 290, 291; Hulsker 1980, pp. 290, 291; Amsterdam 1987, p. 335, no. 1.174; Dorn 1990, p. 278, note 272; Sund 1992, pp. 156, 159; Hulsker 1996, pp. 288, 290, 291; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 57, 70; Coyle 2007, p. 312; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 84, 285, 311.

Exhibitions
1905 Amsterdam 11, no. 435 [Dfl. 500]; 2008 Amsterdam, no cat.

115
Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette

Paris, late July 1887
Oil on canvas
81.0 x 100.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 18 V/1962
F 316 JH 1246

Letters 582, 589, 592, 594, 624

After his painting expeditions to Asnières, Van Gogh produced two remarkably large landscapes in late July and the first half of August 1887 which are closely related in both subject matter and style. They are *Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette* (cat. 115) and *Allotments in Montmartre* (fig. 115a).[1] The former measures 81 x 100 cm, the latter 96 x 120 cm, which makes them and *Garden with courting couples: square Saint-Pierre* of May that year (cat. 104) the largest landscapes in Van Gogh's entire oeuvre.[2] Their unusual size suggests that the first two were intended to be the apotheosis of his attempts in the previous months to get 'sunlight' into his landscapes.[3]

The fact that he did not choose subjects from around Asnières was probably due to the size he had decided on. The difficulty of carrying such large canvases around would have made it more practical to depict subjects closer to home, on the hill of Montmartre. The smaller size of *Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette* (cat. 115) means that it would have preceded *Allotments in Montmartre* (fig. 115a). In contrast to the latter, Van Gogh first explored the subject, the land belonging to the Debrays, in a drawing and three paintings (cat. 114, figs. 114c, 114d, 115d).[4]

Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette (cat. 115) was painted on the hill looking to the northwest, with the hills of Meudon in the distance on the right and the factories of Clichy on the left (on which see cat. 91), and as in the other canvas the main subject is the allotments. The view is of the land just in front of the old farmhouse belonging to the Debray family (on which see cats. 64, 65), part of which can be seen on the right. We can work out where Van Gogh stood from a photograph of 1887 taken by the amateur photographer Henri Daudet. He was on the intersection of a path leading straight to the farmhouse and another running parallel to it (figs. 115c, 115d).[5]

For the other large painting, *Allotments in Montmartre* (fig. 115a), he took up a position on rue Caulaincourt, as he had done for the views of the hill he had painted in 1886 (cats. 64, 65, fig. 64b) but now much further along, as can be seen from another of Daudet's photographs, this one from 19 June 1887 (fig. 115b).[6] The hill was barely recognisable as such from this spot, but it did afford a fine view of the north side with its many allotments, which had traditionally been known as the Maquis. Until now the allotments had been of very little interest to Van Gogh (see cat. 93).

The plants in them are in full flower in *Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette*, and some of them are easily recognisable. There is a rambling rose against a shed on the right, while behind the fence to the left of the centre there is a rhubarb that has finished flowering. The garden on the right is full of sunflowers, and there is another one just to the left of the shed with the sloping roof in the centre. The plants are not so recognisable in *Allotments in Montmartre* (fig. 115a), apart from in

1 Both works were exhibited in 1888 under the respective titles 'Derrière le moulin de la Galette. – Montmartre' (*Behind the Moulin de la Galette, Montmartre*) and 'La butte Montmartre' (*The hill of Montmartre*) (1888 Paris, nos. 660 and 659). It is not clear whether those are the titles that Theo supplied or were thought up by the organisers of the exhibition. We have retained the first one with a minor alteration but changed the second one to make it less general.
2 On this see cat. 101, note 11, and cat. 104.
3 Letter 572, written between about 23 and 25 July 1887.
4 F 810 JH 2109 (fig. 115d) was dated to 1890 for a long time, until Roland Dorn rightly identified the building as the Debray farmhouse in Essen/Amsterdam 1990-91, p. 81. F 1411 JH 1305 (fig. 114c) and F 264a JH 1306 (fig. 114d) show the shed that stood further along the path to the left of *Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette*.
5 For Daudet and his photographs see Ronald Pickvance in Martigny 2000, pp. 138, 139.
6 The similarities between the two paintings and Daudet's two photographs are remarkable, and may not be coincidental. Both Daudet and Van Gogh were very fond of the old, rustic Montmartre that was on the point of disappearing. The photographs are part of a series about Montmartre that the amateur photographer began in 1886 (and completed in 1890), and cannot be seen in isolation from the Société d'Historie et d'Archéologie du XVIIIe arrondissement, Le Vieux Montmartre, which was founded the same year and of which Daudet was a member. One of the society's aims was to interest the public in the historic character of the neighbourhood (see note 5).



115 Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette

the foreground, where there is a sunflower.[7] Sunflowers bloom between roughly the middle of July and the end of August, so both paintings would have been made in that period,[8] although Van Gogh's correspondence makes it possible to be more precise about *Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette.* In a letter from late July 1887 he wrote 'I have a big one on the go' [572], which can only refer to *Allotments in Montmartre* or *Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette,* but since the painting in the Van Gogh Museum was the first of the two we assume that that is the one referred to. It and four smaller landscapes painted in mid-July were part of 'a decoration for a dining room or a house in the country' [572].[9] The series was meant to radiate a sense of 'open air and good cheer', although Van Gogh did realise that the large painting would be difficult to sell. Since he wrote that the suite 'will make a decoration' one has to take account of the fact that he might have wanted to add to the series, so *Allotments in Montmartre* (fig. 115a), which although later is nevertheless so close in style and iconography, could equally well have been part of it.

Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette is on a loosely woven, poor-quality canvas of the standard *figure* 40 size (Table 3.5, no. 29). After being stretched it was sized and given a lead white ground which was applied so thinly that the texture of the threads remained clearly visible. It is known from examination with infrared reflectography and the stereomicroscope that Van Gogh used a perspective frame to establish the composition, which shows that the work was not painted in the studio but on the spot, or at least largely so. He did not trace the entire frame with graphite, only part of it. The lower left corner of it can be made out at bottom right in the painting. The bottom bar was traced in the path up to a point just to the right of where it splits, while the vertical one is visible up as far as the small sheds in the middleground. Van Gogh drew a diagonal from the lower left corner of the frame to those sheds, where it is crossed by a short horizontal line. Assuming that that intersection marked the centre of the frame, the latter was a standard *paysage* 25 size (81 x 60 cm). Van Gogh also drew a freehand sketch of the scene.[10]

This use of a perspective frame for part of the composition only is also found in two other landscapes painted out of doors (cats. 92, 107). The common factor in all three works is a strongly receding compositional element. Here it is the path going off to the right, and it seems that Van Gogh needed the aid to construct it properly. He attached great importance to a convincing rendering of space in the foreground, as we know from an earlier letter to his pupil Anton Kerssemakers: 'What I wanted to say in connection with your new studies is that for the sake of the foregrounds, in particular, which always seem to me to be too insubstantial and prevent there being enough space in them, is that I suggest it would be very good if you also gave it a try with a perspective frame' [518].

Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette was painted rapidly and almost entirely wet-into-wet, with only a few contours and details being added on top of paint that had dried. Van Gogh made abundant use of loose hatchings of different lengths in both this painting and *Allotments in Montmartre* (fig. 115a), drawing on the experience he had gained from his earlier Neo-Impressionist experiments (cats. 104-06, 108). This graphic pattern consists of powerful, recurring colours. They were placed beside and on top of each other on the white ground, and nowhere is the structure complex. The strong luminosity of the ground only

7 This was not done until late in the painting process (kind communication from Elisabeth Bracht, Chief Conservator of Paintings, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam).
8 In 1887 the first sunflower bloomed in Saint-Maur, near Paris, on 3 August; see Relevés Météorologiques, Parc de Saint-Maur, August 1887, A 34, under Journal Métérologique, Paris, Météo France. It happened on 1 August the previous year.
9 These works can no longer be identified. One of them was exhibited at Tanguy's shop, as the letter tells us. It may have been 'the study [Tanguy] has of Asnières – a bank of the Seine' (F 300 JH 1275 or F 353 JH 1271), which Van Gogh said in 1888 that the colourman should keep [637].
10 No underdrawing of a perspective frame was found in *Allotments in Montmartre* (fig. 115a), but there is a similar freehand sketch; kind communication from Elisabeth Bracht, Chief Conservator of Paintings, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.



115a *Allotments in Montmartre* (F 350 JH 1245), 1887. Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum.



115b Henri Daudet, *The Debray windmill seen from rue Caulaincourt*, 19 June 1887. From *Le vieux Montmartre*, 1886-90, no. 40. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet des Estampes.

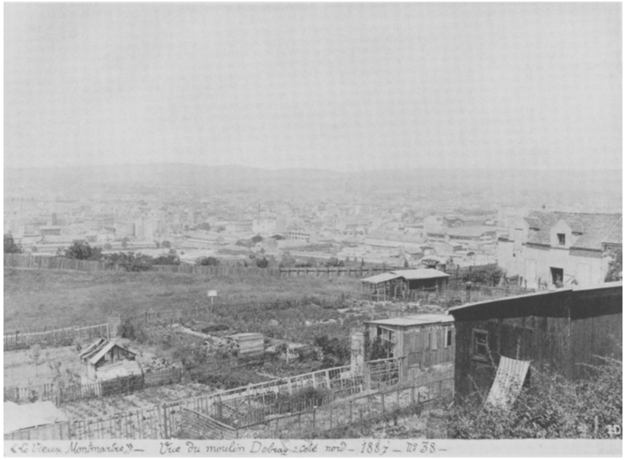
emerged to its full extent recently when the yellowed varnish was removed. Van Gogh made the optimum use of the bright white of that underlayer, especially in the path in the foreground, although it also shows through locally in the sky, which was painted with very thin, often slightly brushed-out zigzagging strokes.

Unfortunately, the harmony of the colours has been badly disrupted by ageing. We know from a remark by Bernard that the sunflowers were originally 'very yellow', but now they are a dark mustard yellow.[11] Pigment analysis has revealed that Van Gogh painted them with the unstable zinc yellow that has also caused problems in other pictures (cats. 127, 128). The other vegetation in the allotments is the same or similar mustard colour, so discolouration will have taken place there as well. It is difficult to gauge the degree to which this is due to ageing, but it seems certain that the allotments once looked fresher and lighter. The parts that are now a little dark and sombre would have been more in harmony with the bright colours of the sky, horizon and sheds.

Another drastic change is due to ageing of the organic red. Van Gogh used two variants: Kopp's purpurin, which is mainly found in the fence on the right, and the unstable cochineal on a tin substrate. The former has kept its colour well, but the latter has not. The thicker strokes of it have lost their intensity of colour and taken on a crumbly texture, as can be seen in the allotments. The effect of ageing in the front of the path and the roofs of the sheds is actually dramatic. Wherever the cochineal was applied as a thin glaze there is now nothing more than a hint of brown. Something of the original pink colour can now only be seen in a few light-coloured impasted strokes. These discolourations have heightened the tonal contrast between the allotments on the one hand and the roofs and path on the other. The former have become darker and the latter lighter.

Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette, which probably had a flat white frame originally (fig. 115e), together with *Piles of French novels and roses in a glass ('Romans parisiens')* (fig. 134c) and *Allotments in Montmartre* (fig. 115a), was exhibited by Theo at Les Indépendants in the spring of 1888 on Vincent's suggestion, where it was admired by Emile Bernard. 'All I remember of his canvases is a large Montmartre landscape, like this: sheds surrounded by large, very yellow sunflowers rise in tiers on the little hill, from the top of which the Moulin de la Galette summons into its arms the so depraved young apprentices of the capital. A leaden sky

11 See cat. 114, note 3.







115c Henri Daudet, *View from the Debray windmill, north side*, 1887. From *Le vieux Montmartre*, 1886-90, no. 38. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet des Estampes.

115d *Garden in front of the Debray farmhouse* (F 810 JH 2109), 1887. Private collection.

115e Detail of a photograph of the exhibition held in Antwerp in 1914. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

presses down on the landscape flooded by a torrid sun.'[12] The critics were less enthusiastic. Gustave Kahn devoted just one devastating line to the landscapes:[13] 'Mr Van Gogh paints large landscapes with a vigorous brush, paying little attention to the value and precision of his tones'.[14] Van Gogh took this piece of conservative criticism in good part. 'I think what Kahn says is quite true, that I haven't paid enough attention to values, but it'll be quite another thing they'll say later – and no less true. It's not possible to do both values and colour. [...] You can't be at the pole and the equator at the same time. You have to choose. And I have high hopes of doing that, too, and it will probably be colour' [594].

He was perfectly satisfied with his achievement, as demonstrated by the suggestion he made in the spring of 1888 that both landscapes be donated to the modern art museum in The Hague that had opened in 1884, which would at least keep the Dutch art world abreast of his recent work.[15] Nothing came of the plan, but it is an indication of how highly he rated the landscapes. However, he could do even better, and in June 1888 he wrote about his recent *Harvest* (Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum): 'It's of the same kind as the two Butte Montmartre landscapes that were in the Independents, but I think it's more substantial and that it has a little more style' [624].

12 Ibid.
13 See Essen/Amsterdam 1990-91, p. 81, for a summary of the critiques of Van Gogh's work in the Paris exhibition, supplemented in Martigny 2000, pp. 126, 139.
14 Kahn 1888.
15 Letter 592.

Provenance

1887-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1917-19 on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1962 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1927-30 on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; 1931-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Literature

Kahn 1888; Bonger 1890, no. 91 [Vue de Montmartre (40)]; Van Gogh 1905, no. 37; Druet 1920, no. 7195; De la Faille 1927, ill. p. 13; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, pp. 90, 91, vol. 2, pl. LXXXVI; De la Faille 1939, p. 268, no. 364; London 1968-69, p. 68, no. 87; De la Faille 1970, pp. 154, 155, 623; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 100, 124, note 47, 168, 234, 251; Hulsker 1977, pp. 277, 278; Hulsker 1980, pp. 277, 278; Van Uitert 1983, pp. 82, 83; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 176, 177, 333, no. 1.158; Amsterdam 1988, pp. 104, 105, no. 44; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 88; Paris 1988, pp. 140, 141, no. 51; Amsterdam 1990, pp. 72, 73, no. 20; Mannheim/Amsterdam 1990, p. 382; Sund 1992, pp. 156, 159; Hulsker 1996, pp. 277, 278; Lurie 1996, pp. 158, 159; Zemel 1997, p. 190; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 119, 124, 127, 128, 130, 132; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 50, 66, 74, note 72; Cologne/Florence/Vienna 2008-10, p. 198; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 91, 286, 306; Rome 2010-11, pp. 156, 157, 249, 250, no. 54 ; Letters 2009, letter 572, note 6, letter 582, note 9, letter 592, note 9, letter 624, note 2.

Exhibitions

1888 Paris, no. 660; 1905 Amsterdam I, no. 55 [Dfl. 1,700]; 1905 Utrecht, no. 16 [Dfl. 1,700]; 1905 Leiden, no. 16 [Dfl. 1,700]; 1906 Rotterdam, no. 16; 1906 Middelburg, no cat. [Dfl. 1,700]; 1908 Paris, no. 23 [Ffr. 7,800]; 1908 Munich, no. 10 (Dfl. 3,500); 1908 Dresden, no. 10 [Dfl. 3,500]; 1908 Frankfurt am Main, no. 13 (for sale); 1908 Zürich, no. 6; 1908 The Hague & Amsterdam, no cat. known, no. 23 [Dfl. 4,000]; 1908 Berlin II, no cat. known [not for sale]; 1910 Berlin, no. 13 [not for sale]; 1911 Frankfurt am Main, no cat. known; 1911 Amsterdam, no. 18 [Dfl. 20,000]; 1914 Antwerp, no. 23; 1914 Berlin, no. 20; 1914 Cologne & Hamburg, no cat. known; 1927 Paris, no cat.; 1929 London, no. 460; 1930 Amsterdam, no. 15; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 53; 1932 Manchester, no. 29; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1946 Maastricht & Heerlen, no. 41; 1946 Stockholm, Gothenburg & Malmö, no. 33; 1946 Copenhagen, no. 34; 1946-47 Liège, Brussels & Mons, no. 58; 1947 Paris, no. 59; 1947 Geneva, no. 60; 1947 Groningen, no. 39; 1947-48 London, Birmingham & Glasgow, no. 20; 1948 Bergen & Oslo, no. 14; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 85; 1951 Lyon & Grenoble, no. 24; 1951 Saint-Rémy, no. 24; 1952 Enschede, no. 21; 1952 Eindhoven, no. 28; 1953 Zundert, no. 15; 1953 Hoensbroek, no. 28; 1953 IJmuiden, no. 15; 1953 Assen, no. 13; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 4; 1954 Zürich, no. 31; 1954-55 Bern, no. 29; 1955 Antwerp, no. 178; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 89; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 21; 1957 Marseille, no. 27; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 36; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 17; 1960-61 Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg & Toronto, no. 28; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 19; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 19; 1963 Humlebæk, no. 14; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 14; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 24; 1968-69 London, no. 87; 1971-72 Paris, no. 38; 1988 Paris, no. 51; 1988 Amsterdam, no. 44; 1990 Amsterdam, no. 20; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2006-07 Brescia, no. 163; 2008-10 Cologne, Florence & Vienna, unnumbered [only Cologne]; 2010-11 Rome, no. 54.

116
Self-portrait with straw hat and pipe

Paris, mid-July-August 1887
Oil on canvas
42.4 x 32.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 68 V/1962
F 179v JH 1300

Verso of *Head of a man*
(F 179r JH 786: fig. 116a)
March-May 1885

117
Self-portrait

Paris, mid-July-August 1887
Oil on canvas
42.2 x 34.4 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 97 V/1962
F 269v JH 1301

Verso of *Head of a woman*
(F 269r JH 725: fig. 116b)
March-May 1885

118
Self-portrait with straw hat

Paris, mid-July-August 1887
Oil on canvas
41.6 x 31.4 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 60 V/1962
F 61v JH 1302

Verso of *Still life with bottles and earthenware*
(F 61r JH 533: fig. 116c)
November 1884-early October 1885

119
Self-portrait

Paris, mid-July-August 1887
Oil on canvas
42.9 x 31.3 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 71 V/1962
F 109v JH 1303

Verso of *Birds' nests*
(F 109r JH 942: fig. 116d)

120
Self-portrait

Paris, mid-July-August 1887
Oil on canvas
44.5 x 33.6 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 135 V/1962
F 77v JH 1304

Verso of *Study for 'The potato eaters'*
(F 77r JH 686: fig. 116e)
Early April 1885



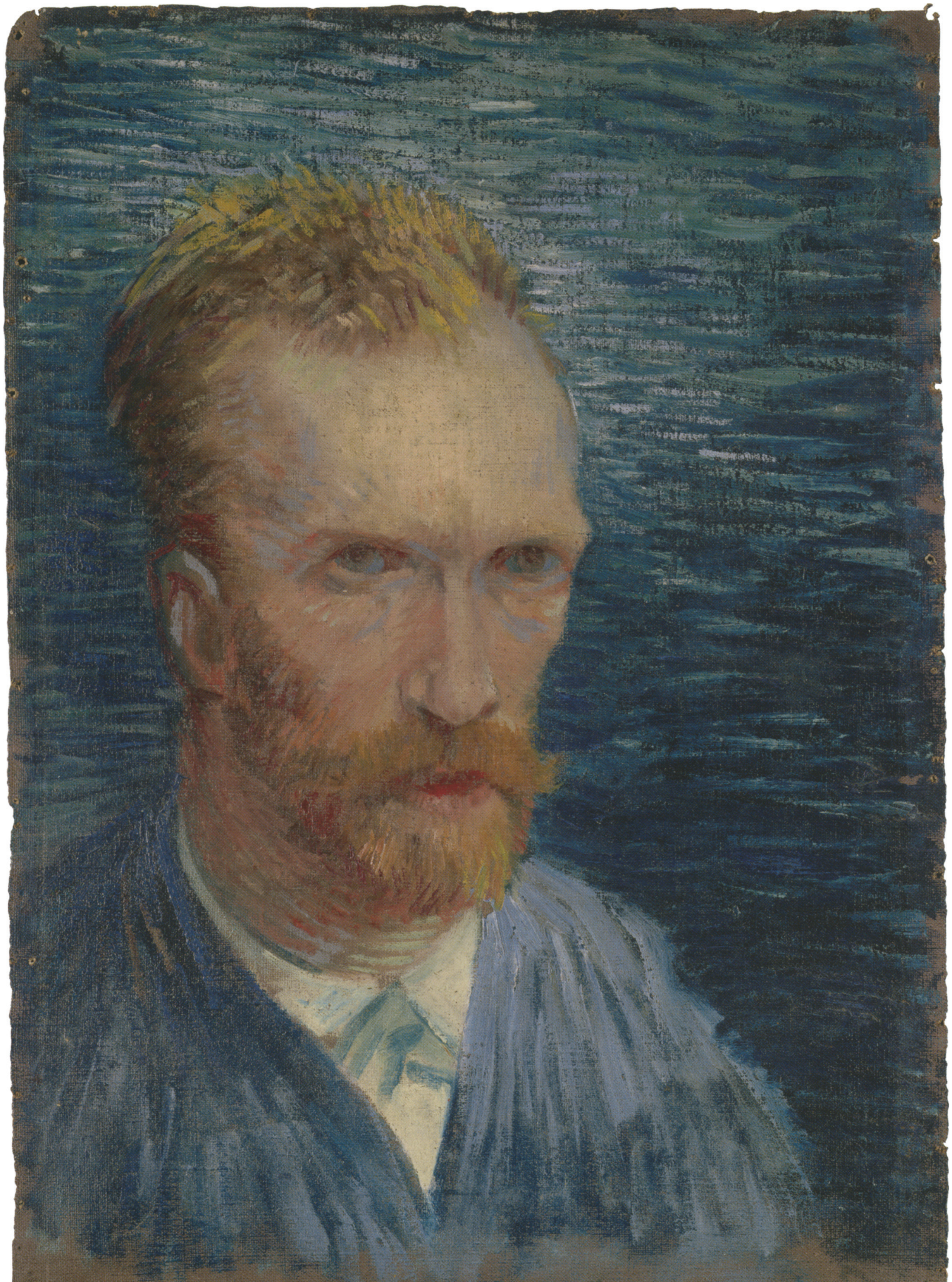
116 Self-portrait with straw hat and pipe



117 Self-portrait



118 Self-portrait with straw hat



119 Self-portrait



120 Self-portrait



116a *Head of a man* (F 179r JH 786), 1885. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum. Recto of cat. 116.



116b *Head of a woman* (F 269r JH 725), 1885. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum. Recto of cat. 117.

Early April 1885

While he was in Paris Van Gogh depicted himself not only as an artist but also as a simple, respectable member of the middle class (see cats. 52, 75, 76, 122). In these closely related self-portraits from the summer of 1887 we see him once in the latter guise (cat. 117) and four times as an artist (cats. 116, 118-20). For the first he donned an overcoat and tie, while in the other four he is wearing his customary blue workman's smock, of which he owned at least two: one high-fastening (cats. 116, 120, 137) and the other with a low collar (cats. 118, 119, fig. 125a).

Van Gogh painted these self-portraits on the backs of works he had made in Nuenen and had sent to Theo in Paris in 1885 (figs. 116a-e).[1] He was not buying ready-made canvases in standard sizes at the time, but cut them from a ready-prepared roll in the sizes that he wanted, as is the case with these five works. The weaves are fairly loose, with 16 to 17 by 13 to 14 threads per centimetre, which turns out to be typical of his Nuenen paintings (Table 3.7).

The group of double-sided works from the summer of 1887 also includes *Allotment with sunflower* (cat. 114) and two other self-portraits that are now in the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Wadsworth

1 For these consignments see Paintings 1, pp. 11-14, 90-102, 238, 239.
2 The authenticity of the New York work (fig. 116f), which is painted on the back of *The potato peeler* of 1885 (F 365r JH 654), is cautiously called into question in Dorn/Feilchenfeldt 1993, p. 296, and Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, but their views need to be examined more closely. It was probably one of the works that Van Gogh gave to the Comtesse de la Boissière, on which see p. 24, note 20. They also had their doubts about the Hartford self-portrait, which is lined (Dorn/Feilchenfeldt 1993, pp. 268, 298). However, we now know that its pinkish brown ground exactly matches that in the other paintings (comparative analysis of samples kindly supplied by Chief Conservator, Stephen Kornhauser, and RCE report no. 2009-059), and that there is a scene of a woman spinning hidden beneath the marouflage (Pagli 1999). Furthermore, the canvas has the typical Nuenen weave, with an average of 17.1 vertical and 13.3 horizontal threads per cm, and is thought to be cut in weft alignment from the same roll as the Nuenen *Head of a woman wearing a white cap*, F 85 JH 693 (Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum, from the unpublished thread count and weave match reports compiled by D. Johnson, C.R. Johnson and E. Hendriks in September 2009. This new information removes the doubts about the authenticity of the picture. Like the Van Gogh Museum canvases discussed in this entry (cats. 116-20), it was painted on the back of a work from Nuenen, probably the woman spinning mentioned in letter 466 of October 1884.
There is another self-portrait (F 178v JH 1198) painted on the back of a Nuenen canvas, but it is usually dated to 1886 (and has also raised doubts; see cat. 74, note 2).
Another self-portrait, F 366 JH 1345, has a pinkish brown background strongly resembling that in cats. 116-20 and fig. 116f, so it was more probably painted in the summer of 1887 than the winter of 1887-88, as suggested by Hulsker (Hulsker 1996, p. 302).



116c *Still life with bottles and earthenware* (F 61r JH 533), 1884-85. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum. Recto of cat. 118.



116d *Birds' nests* (F 109r JH 942), 1885. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum. Recto of cat. 119.



116e *Study for 'The potato eaters'* (F 77r JH 686), 1885. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum. Recto of cat. 120.

Atheneum in Hartford (figs. 116f, 116g).[2] The decision to use the backs of earlier paintings shows that Van Gogh was in dire financial straits again. It is known that he ran short of materials in July 1887, and in a letter to Theo, who was visiting the Netherlands at the time, he explained that his financial situation had worsened unexpectedly. He said that he had had plenty of canvases when he started working in Asnières at the end of April or beginning of May 1887, but that he had now got through them [571]. That meant that he had to start investing again, and to make matters worse he was no longer getting materials and paints free from Père Tanguy, whose wife had discovered what was going on and had put a stop to it.

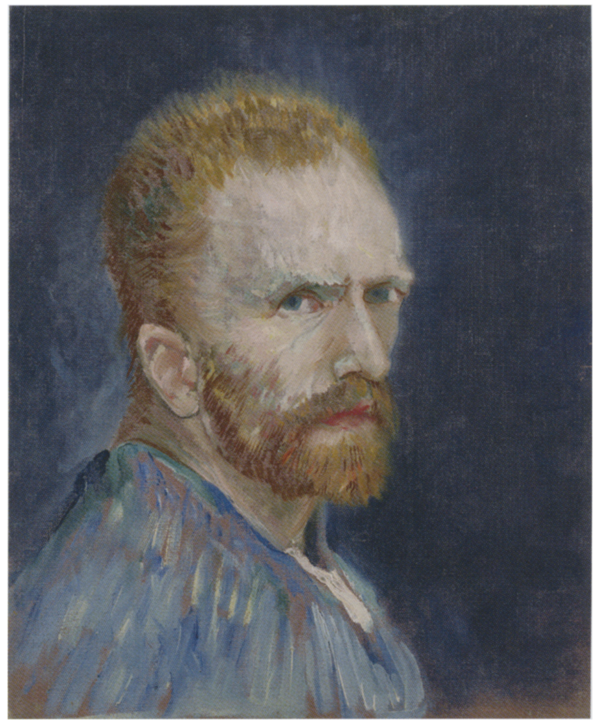
This forced Van Gogh to start economising, and one of the measures he took was to paint on the backs of earlier works.[3] Another was to switch from expensive oil paintings to watercolours for the time being. At any rate we know that one watercolour (fig. 114d) and the painting on the back of an old canvas (cat. 114) roughly date from late July, in other words after his cry of distress in mid-July. That makes

3 As far as is known at present, Van Gogh first painted on the back of a work from Nuenen in 1886 (see F 178v JH 1198 and note 2 above). In 1887 he once used the back of a work by another artist (see cat. 112 and fig. 111b).

4 The drawings are F 1400 JH 1283, F 1410 JH 1286, F 1402 JH 1280, F 1403 JH 1281, F 1406 JH 1277 (fig. 92h) and F 1411 JH 1305, which are dated June-September 1887 in Drawings 3, pp. 295-310.



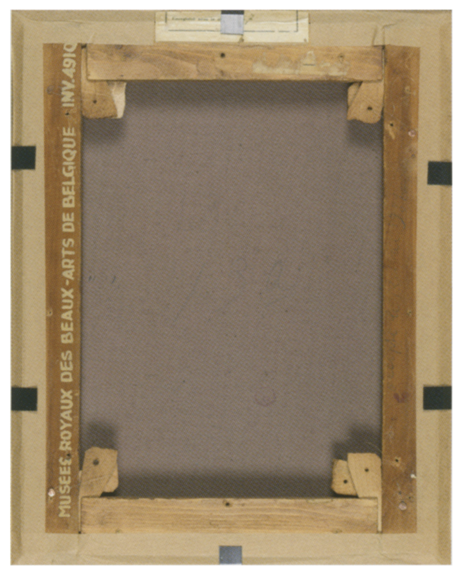
116f *Self-portrait with a straw hat* (F 365v JH 1354), 1887. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



116g *Self-portrait* (F 268 JH 1299), 1887. Hartford, Wadsworth Atheneum.

it likely that the other works with painted backs (cats. 116-20, figs. 116f, 116g) and all the watercolours are from that same period.[4]

Van Gogh prepared for the five Paris self-portraits by giving all the Nuenen works a pinkish-brown ground mixed from no fewer than 11 pigments (Table 3.7 and p. 117, fig. 38). He applied exactly the same underlayer in *Allotment with sunflower* (cat. 114), the Hartford canvas (fig. 116g) and, it seems, in the New York self-portrait too (fig. 116f), as well as using it to cover the images beneath two paintings of trees and undergrowth (cats. 111, 112), which date from the same period. The layers on the backs of *Head of a woman* (Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum) and *Head of a man* (Brussels, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts) are probably the same, but Van Gogh never painted scenes on top (fig. 116h).[5]



116h Reverse of *Head of a man* (F 163 JH 687), 1885. Brussels, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts.

The pinkish brown paint was applied directly onto the backs of the paintings without sizing them first, with the result that the paint immediately penetrated the fabric (p. 117, fig. 39). The brush that Van Gogh used was of very poor quality and left numerous bristles behind in the paint. The ground has remained clearly visible around the edges but plays only a limited role in the scenes themselves, with the exception of the unfinished self-portrait (cat. 116). The pinkish brown is generally well-covered in the other four paintings, particularly in the flesh tones, although it does show through in the dominant blue passages. This is in contrast to woodland scenes (cats. 111, 112), in which Van Gogh left the pinkish brown visible as a mid-tone.

The many holes in the canvases show that Van Gogh attached them to a frame or some other hard surface with nails or drawing pins both when painting the works in Nuenen and when adding the self-portraits in Paris. The paint of the ground is depressed around some of the holes in three of the self-portraits (cats. 116, 118, 119), so it was not yet properly dry when the canvases were tacked up. It is also known that two of these works (cats. 118, 119), as well as cat. 120, retained their original sizes. Both the ground and the background paint extend over the outer edges of the

5 The work in the Van Gogh Museum is F 156 JH 569 (see Paintings 1, cat. 10, p. 99).

canvas, where they form a thin ridge. The other two canvases have been trimmed (cats. 116, 117), although only lightly, for the holes are still present.

Oddly, one of the self-portraits (cat. 117) was painted slightly askew on the canvas, and has a fairly broad unpainted strip all around, as was the case with *Allotment with sunflower* (cat. 114). Those two works may therefore have been painted in a frame, most likely in a wooden frame clamp called a *stirator*.[6] Van Gogh probably used the same frame for both works, because the two compositions are exactly the same size. The canvas of cat. 117 must have been clamped at a slight angle, which would account for the self-portrait being out of true.

The five self-portraits, not one of which has any trace of an underdrawing, were all painted rapidly, which makes it difficult to unravel the structure. Each one seems to have been completed in a single session. In every case Van Gogh started by applying the flesh tones with thin paints which he feathered wet-into-wet. He then painted a sketchy, thin layer for the background, leaving space for the clothing and hats, before working alternately on those three elements with increasingly thick paint.

The unfinished self-portrait (cat. 116) gives a good idea of how the other four would have looked during the painting process. The faces are the most finished elements, and were executed with a fine brush, while the generally sketchy clothing and hats were done with broader brushstrokes. The rough surface of the support was left intact, because most of the thick paint remained on the nubs of the canvas weave and did not fill in the troughs. At the very last moment Van Gogh added some particularly dry strokes here and there in lighter and brighter colours than the paint below in order to roughen up the look of the picture surface. He also displayed a certain nonchalance about the finished result, because there are quite a few paint spatters and many bristles from the brush were left behind in the paint. In addition, he did not wait until the paint was dry before storing the canvases away. Bits of paint from other works were pressed into the surfaces, and in one case (cat. 117) there is a visible impression of the canvas weave of another work.

These self-portraits were not rated very highly after Van Gogh's death. It is known that three of them (cats. 118-20) were covered by cardboard backings that were removed by the restorer J.C. Traas in 1929,[7] which is probably when they lost some flakes of paint. In addition, the canvas of three of them (cats. 118, 119 and to a lesser extent 120) has started to buckle a little, probably due to contact with something damp when the backings were removed. On one of the covered paintings (cat. 120) there are the very faint pencilled words 'dit vervalt' ('this to go') on Van Gogh's forehead, evidently to indicate that the backing was to be applied to this side of the canvas.[8] A diagonal line has been drawn in pencil through another of the self-portraits (cat. 116), so it too was probably to be covered with a backing. An annotation at bottom right on the same painting (cat. 116) is difficult to make out, but it is probably the digit '8', which would have been written in 1926 when *Head of a man*, the painting on the other side, was exhibited under that number in Amsterdam.[9]

6 For the *stirator* see p. 103, and p. 96, fig. 12.
7 See Paintings 1, p. 87, note 26. See also the letter about cats. 119 and 120 from J.C. Traas to V.W. van Gogh, 10 June 1926 (b 8671).
8 See Paintings 1, p. 87, note 26. What is actually written is 'dit vervult' ('this fulfills'), but that must be a slip of the pen.
9 Amsterdam 1926, no. 8, which means that unlike cat. 120 this painting did not have a backing prior to the exhibition.

Cat. 116

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
Van den Eerenbeemt 1924, p. 265; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 55, vol. 2, pl. XLVIII [as 179recto]; De la Faille 1939, p. 183, no. 229 [F 179]; Bromig-Kolleritz 1954, pp. 43, 44, 54, 97, 98; Erpel 1964, p. 55, no. 11; De la Faille 1970, pp. 100, 179, 618; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 225; Hulsker 1977, pp. 264, 288, 289; Hulsker 1980, pp. 262, 288, 289; Amsterdam 1987, p. 334, no. 1.164; Dorn/Feilchenfeldt 1993, p. 296; Hamburg 1995, pp. 104, 105; Hulsker 1996, pp. 262, 288, 289; Dorn 2005, p. 21; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 57, 70; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 38, 311.

EXHIBITIONS
1924 Amsterdam, no. 1; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 65; 1953 The Hague, no. 64; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 55; 1960 London, no. 4; 1961 Humlebæk, no. 79? [possibly cat. 129]; 1994 Amsterdam, no cat.; 1995 Hamburg, unnumbered; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.

Cat. 117

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 79, vol. 2, pl. LXXIII [as 269recto]; De la Faille 1939, p. 303, no. 419 [F 269]; Bromig-Kolleritz 1954, pp. 47, 104; Hammacher 1960, pp. 10, 12; Erpel 1964, p. 59, no. 28; De la Faille 1970, pp. 136, 622; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 226; Hulsker 1977, pp. 264, 288, 289; Hulsker 1980, pp. 262, 288, 289; Amsterdam 1987, p. 334, no. 1.165; Dorn/Feilchenfeldt 1993, p. 296; Hulsker 1996, pp. 262, 288, 289; Dorn 2005, p. 21; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 57, 70; Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 38.

EXHIBITIONS
1937 Paris, no. 2; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1953 The Hague, no. 69; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 58; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 61; 1955 Antwerp, no. 203; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 111; 1957 Kampen, no. 28; 1957-58 Stockholm, no. 108, Luleå, Kiruna, Umeå, Östersund, Sandviken & Gothenburg, no cat. known; 1960 London, no. 14; 1966-67 Dordrecht & Arnhem, no. 19; 1974-75 Milan, no. 7; 1994 Amsterdam, no cat.; 1995 Hamburg, unnumbered; 1997 Venice, no. 5; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.

Cat. 118

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
Not in De la Faille 1928; Algemeen Handelsblad 1929; De la Faille 1939, p. 297, no. 410; Bromig-Kolleritz 1954, pp. 47, 104; Hammacher 1960, p. 10; Erpel 1964, pp. 56, 57, no. 16; De la Faille 1970, pp. 63, 178, 614; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 225; Hulsker 1977, pp. 264, 288, 290; Hulsker 1980, pp. 262, 288, 290; Amsterdam 1987, p. 333, no. 1.161; Van Tilborgh 1994, p. 6; Hamburg 1995, pp. 108, 109; Hulsker 1996, pp. 262, 288, 290; Dorn 2005, p. 21; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 57, 70; Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 38.

EXHIBITIONS
1953 The Hague, no. 60; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 52; 1955 Antwerp, no. 199; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 107; 1960 London, no. 9; 1994 Amsterdam, no cat.; 1995 Hamburg, unnumbered; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.

Cat. 119

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
Not in De la Faille 1928; Algemeen Handelsblad 1929; De la Faille 1939, p. 298, no. 411; Bromig-Kolleritz 1954, pp. 47, 105; Hammacher 1960, pp. 10-12; Erpel 1964, p. 59, no. 26; De la Faille 1970, pp. 80, 178, 179, 615; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 226; Hulsker 1977, pp. 264, 288, 290; Hulsker 1980, pp. 262, 288, 290; Amsterdam 1987, p. 333, no. 1.163; Hamburg 1995, pp. 110, 111; Hulsker 1996, pp. 262, 288, 290; Dorn 2005, p. 21; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 56, 57, 59, 70; Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 38.

EXHIBITIONS
1937 Paris, no. 3; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 64; 1953 The Hague, no. 62; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 54; 1954 Zürich, no. 25; 1955 Antwerp, no. 200; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 108; 1960 London, no. 10; 1994 Amsterdam, no cat.; 1995 Hamburg, unnumbered; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.

Cat. 120

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
Not in De la Faille 1928; Algemeen Handelsblad 1929; De la Faille 1939, after p. 288, no. VI; Bromig-Kolleritz 1954, pp. 36, 47, 104; Erpel 1964, p. 59, no. 27; De la Faille 1970, pp. 68, 178, 614; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 226; Hulsker 1977, pp. 264, 288, 290; Hulsker 1980, pp. 262, 288, 290; Amsterdam 1987, p. 333, no. 1.162; Hamburg 1995, pp. 112, 113; Hulsker 1996, pp. 262, 288, 290; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 119, 124; Dorn 2005, p. 21; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 57, 70; Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 39.

EXHIBITIONS
1937 Paris, no. 4; 1953 The Hague, no. 61; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 53; 1954-55 Bern, no. 32; 1955 Antwerp, no. 197; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 105; 1960 London, no. 5; 1994 Amsterdam, no cat.; 1995 Hamburg, unnumbered; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.

121
Portrait of Theo van Gogh

122
Self-portrait

121
Paris, summer 1887
Oil on *carton*
19.0 x 14.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 157 V/1962
F 294 JH 1209

122
Paris, summer 1887
Oil on *carton*
19.0 x 14.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 156 V/1962
F 296 JH 1210

These two works and a self-portrait from the spring of 1887 (cat. 97) are the smallest paintings in Van Gogh's oeuvre. They are on *figure o cartons* (19 x 14 cm), which is the size stamped on the back (figs. 97a, 121a, 121b). The ground is a cool light grey of the same composition in each case. It is a standard kind of smoothly primed *carton* that Van Gogh had already used before (see cats. 60-63).[1]

The three works differ in style. The brushwork in the earlier one (cat. 97) is loose to the point of coarseness, whereas these two are painstaking and detailed, and executed with a fine brush. They used to be dated to the spring of 1887, but that is ruled out by the fact that the palette and brushwork display not a trace of the Neo-Impressionist idiom.[2] However, it is difficult to place them precisely, so we have opted for the fairly wide span of the summer of 1887, a period of many self-portraits (see cats. 116-20, 125, fig. 125a).

Van Gogh first made underdrawings, probably in graphite. They are readily visible to the naked eye, but the infrared photographs give a better idea of them (figs. 121c, 121d). They merely indicate the contours, with a little hatching to suggest shadows in Theo's portrait. In both cases Van Gogh then set to work on the faces before switching to the clothing and the background and then back to the head again. He started with thin paint which he gradually thickened, as can be seen in the hats. He followed the underdrawing in cat. 121 but deviated from it in the self-portrait, setting the hat a little straighter and higher on the head and making the brim smaller, revealing more of his forehead. He also reduced the width of the right arm and shoulder by covering them loosely with the blue of the background.

The colour schemes of each portrait are different, so there is a rather marked contrast between the two. Van Gogh used a deep blue for the jacket in cat. 121, a slightly lighter blue for the background and a bright yellow for the hat, which tend to overpower the more muted tones of the face, apart from the blue of the eyes and the red of the lips. In the self-portrait, on the other hand, he used almost pastel-like colours that are unusual for him: pale blue for the background and a pale greyish pink for the jacket, against which his face with the bright orange beard stands out. He tamped the impasted paint onto the jacket with a stiff brush, creating the impression that it is made of rough cloth.

The portraits are unusual not only for their small size but also for their detail, and that combination suggests that Van Gogh was trying to compete with photographs. He had dreamed of that during his time in Antwerp: 'it's a cause worth fighting for to show people that there's something else in human beings besides

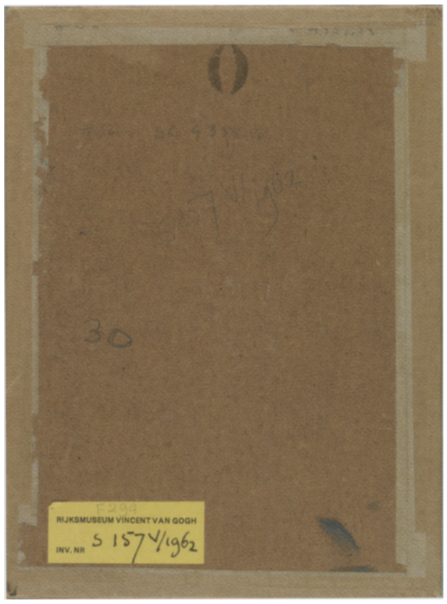
1 For this kind of *carton* see pp. 97, 98.
2 De la Faille 1970, p. 144, no. 294, and p. 148, no. 296, was the first to suggest that the two works dated from the spring of 1887, and this was then widely adopted.



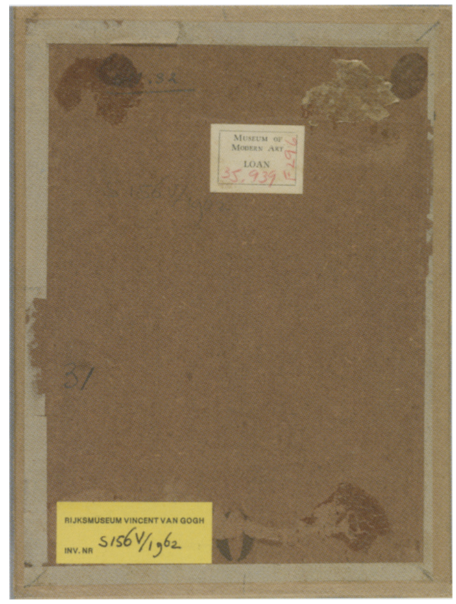
121 Portrait of Theo van Gogh



122 Self-portrait



121a Reverse of cat. 121.



121b Reverse of cat. 122.

what the photographer is able to get out of them with his machine' [547]. Hand-coloured portrait photographs were all the rage at the time, and he saw that as an opportunity for himself and others. That being said, though, Van Gogh was rather nonchalant with these two paintings, picking them up while they were still wet and leaving his fingerprints behind on the edges. The paint contains minuscule cardboard fibres and the impasto is flattened here and there, so we know cardboard was pressed down on them at an early stage.

Both paintings were traditionally regarded as self-portraits, but in 1958 De la Faille raised doubts about cat. 122. Working on the premise that it would have been very odd if Vincent had never painted his brother during the two years he lived with him in Paris, he suggested that this was a portrait of Theo.[3] There was a close resemblance between the brothers, as Jo van Gogh-Bonger noted in 1914, the main difference being that her husband was 'more delicately built and his features were more refined, but he had the same reddish fair complexion'.[4]

Vincent Willem van Gogh, Theo's son, dismissed De la Faille's theory, and the question of whether one of Van Gogh's supposed painted self-portraits is in fact a portrait of his brother has never been posed since.[5] We agree that it is not relevant in the case of all the self-portraits – apart from this pair. The two men differ far more from each other than do any other stylistically related self-portraits by Van Gogh (see, for example, cat. 98, figs. 97c, 97d, cat. 125, fig. 125a).[6] To put it another way: if these are the portraits of one and the same person, that is to say Vincent, it is incomprehensible that there should be such a great differences in facial appearance, given the similarities in style and degree of detail. That is difficult to explain, which suggests that the opposing view that these are two different people, Theo

3 De la Faille 1958, pp. 3, 4. This was based on the assumption that this study was exhibited in Paris in 1901 as 'Portrait de Théodore Van Gogh' (no. 11), but in fact that was probably F 366 JH 1345, which is certainly a self-portrait (Dorn 2005, p. 14). De la Faille believed that the exhibited work came from Jo van Gogh-Bonger, which would have justified the identification of the man as Theo, but it did not. It came from the Paris art dealer Ambroise Vollard.

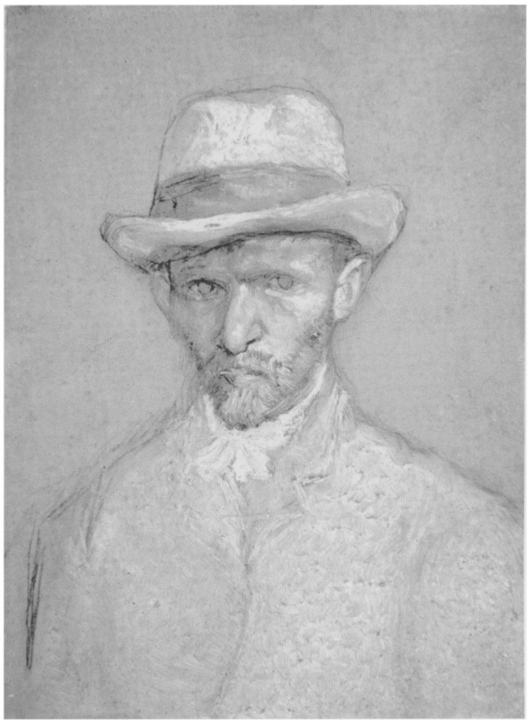
4 Letters 1958, vol. 1, p. XX.

5 De la Faille's idea was not a new one, for Carl Nordenfalk had asked Theo's son 15 years previously whether this portrait and F 295 JH 1211 (fig. 97d) were of his father. He said that they were not, adding that no one in the family had ever suggested they were (letters of 19 June and 8 July 1943, b 7649 and b 7650). When De la Faille made the same suggestion years later, Vincent Willem vehemently denied it. 'Absolutely out of the question! My mother said it was Vincent' ('Geen sprake van! Mijn moeder zeide dat het Vincent was!'), as he noted in his copy of De la Faille's oeuvre catalogue of 1939 (BVG 447a), and it was because of this that A.M. Hammacher rejected De la Faille's suggestion (Hammacher 1960, pp. 9, 10). However, it is still unclear whether Jo knew the two portraits well or studied them closely. Neither painting is mentioned in her letters or notes, and they were never selected for an exhibition while she was alive.

6 It is assumed in the literature that he only made drawings of his brother. Both Hulsker 1992 and Arnold 1980 believed that Theo was depicted in F 1244d JH 1158, a man with a moustache. That was an old suggestion of Hans Jaffé's (see the letter from M.E. Tralbaut to Willem Sandberg, 27 May 1954, in which he said that he concurred, adding: 'But Vincent [Willem van Gogh] [...] gets very angry when it's mentioned' 'Doch Vincent [...] wordt erg boos wanneer er over gesproken wordt'). However, it is very difficult to make a convincing case that that man really is Theo (see Drawings 3, pp. 241-44).



121c Infrared reflectogram of cat. 121.



121d Infrared reflectogram of cat. 122.

and Vincent, is far more logical. The question is: does anything else point in that direction, and if so, can we work out who is who?

The differences are quite striking. The man with the straw hat and stiff bow tie has blue eyes, an ochre-coloured beard without side whiskers, and a remarkably round shell of his ear (cat. 121). The person with the felt hat and floppy bow tie has light, greyish blue eyes, a bright orange beard and cheeks that look rather more sunken (cat. 122).[7] Beneath their jackets with piping around the edges is a waistcoat with red edging. The floppy bow tie was a little more common in artistic circles, but apart from that this was normal middle-class attire. What is unusual is the combination of the informal straw hat with the formal bow tie.[8]

The clothing worn by both men is unusual for Vincent, or at least for the Vincent we know from the self-portraits. Some show him with a straw hat and a blue jacket with piping (fig. 116f), and in several he wears a grey felt hat (fig. 97d, cat. 130), but he never portrayed himself in a light greyish pink jacket or with a bow tie.

So the comparison with the clothes Vincent is wearing is of no help, but a comparison of the heads with those of the two brothers is. A self-portrait from the first half of 1887 (fig. 121e)[9] shows Van Gogh with the same sunken cheeks as in cat. 122,[10] so we can take it that this is his own likeness, as already asserted by Theo's son.[11] That would mean that the other man is Theo, but are there any firm indications that it is?

The ear of the man in cat. 121 has a beautiful round shell, and that is certainly not what Vincent's ears looked like. He had fleshy earlobes and a lot of cartilage (figs. 121f, 121g). Theo, on the other hand, had round ears (fig. 121h),[12] so could very well be the man in the straw hat (cat. 121). As luck would have it there is a second clue to his identity. The man in that portrait has no side whiskers, and we know that Theo did not have any either. Vincent had a natural, unruly beard, as can be seen from the self-portraits, whereas Theo trimmed his and either shaved his cheeks or had

7 The irises are on a grey-blue underlayer on which the contours are indicated with graphite. The white of the eye was then made a little bluer. The irises have darkened a little, giving them a piercing look.
8 Kind communication from Bianca du Mortier, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.
9 That this really is a self-portrait is clear from the testimony of Theo's brother-in-law, Andries Bonger, who was its first owner (see Tralbaut 1963 I, p. 48).
10 Van Gogh had very bad teeth and had gone to a dentist in Antwerp to have them seen to (see letters 557, 559, 574). However, they continued to bother him, and he repeatedly remarked that both Rembrandt and Delacroix were toothless (in letters 649, 655 and 800, for example).
11 See note 5.
12 This photograph of Theo was taken by the Paris photographer Ernest Ladrey (b 4781) during the Exposition Universelle in 1878, as noted on the back (for a second photograph see b 4782). These are the photographs referred to in the letters from Caro van Stockum-Van Haanenbeek to Theo van Gogh and from Theo to Elisabeth van Gogh of 13 May and 29 June 1878 (b 1087, b 948).





121e *Self-portrait* (F 295 JH 1211), 1887. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

121f John Peter Russell, *Portrait of Vincent van Gogh*, 1886. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

no hair growth there. That is how he appears in photographs from 1889 (figs. 121i, 121j),[13] and in drawings by Joseph Isaäcson and Meijer de Haan from 1888-89 (figs. 121k, 121l).[14]

That these two men are indeed Theo and Vincent is confirmed by the different colour of their beards. Vincent himself said that he had 'a very red beard' [626], and always painted it a bright orange after embracing the modern movement in the winter of 1886/87. That is also the colour of the beard of the man in the grey felt hat (cat. 122), which also argues for Vincent as the sitter. The beard of the man in the other portrait, though, is not orange but more ochre in colour, and interestingly enough that matches Jo's description of the two brothers' hair colour. She did not know Vincent well, but Theo she did, and said that his was 'reddish fair'.[15]

That may seem to resolve the problem, but it does not do so entirely. The colour of the men's eyes contradicts this identification. Theo's are bright blue (cat. 121) while Vincent's are light greyish blue. Neither colour matches what we know about their eyes. According to Jo, Theo had 'the same light blue eyes [as Vincent] which sometimes darkened to a greenish-blue'[16] but that is certainly not true of Vincent's eyes. They were not light blue but green. That, at any rate, is how he described them in a letter from Arles, and it is how he depicted them consistently from his first attempts at self-portraits in 1886 right up to those from 1889, in which he always gave his irises a greenish hue.[17]



121g J.M.W. de Louw, photograph of Vincent van Gogh, 1873. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

13 These photographs of Theo with a beard are by F.D. van Rosmalen Jr and the former firm of Woodbury & Page, which was bought by Adolf Constantine Franz Groth in 1881. Since Jo van Gogh-Bonger also had photographs taken by these firms (b 4818, b 4789, b 4790), we know that they date from January 1889, when Theo was on a brief visit to Amsterdam. He spoke of them in letters to Jo of 20 January and 11 and 12 February 1889 (Van Crimpen 1999, pp. 100, 155); see also the letter from Elisabeth van Gogh to Jo, b 2414, which was probably written in early 1889.

14 This is also the case in another drawn portrait of Theo by Joseph Isaäcson (d 767). The person who is believed to be Theo in a drawing by Lucien Pissarro (Oxford, Ashmolean Museum), which is thought to be of the brothers, also has a trimmed beard (Bailey 1994). However, it looks more like a goatee and the moustache is really very small indeed, so there are doubts as to whether this actually is Theo.

15 See note 4.

16 Letters 1958, vol. 1, p. XX.

17 The description of his own face is in letter 626. Hartrick 1939, p. 40, also said that Van Gogh had 'a light blue eye', but he had probably read Jo's 1914 introduction to the letters (see note 4; an English translation was published in 1927: Letters 1927). Vincent's sister Elisabeth thought that her brother's eyes were 'sometimes blue, sometimes greenish' ('blauw dan weer groenachtig'), but it is possible that she, like Jo van Gogh-Bonger, was basing this on Theo's, who unlike Vincent saw his sisters in later years (Du Quesne-Van Gogh 1910, p. 17).



121h Ernest Ladrey, photograph of Theo van Gogh, 1878. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



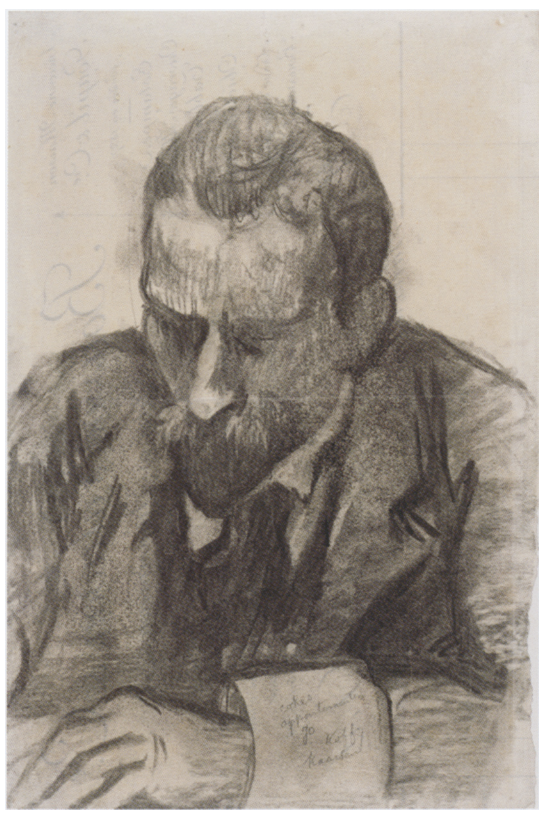
121i F.D. van Rosmalen Jr, photograph of Theo van Gogh, 1889. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



121j Woodbury & Page, photograph of Theo van Gogh, 1889. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



121k Joseph Isaäcson, *Portrait of Theo van Gogh*, 1888-89. Whereabouts unknown.



121l Meijer de Haan, *Portrait of Theo van Gogh*, 1888-89. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

This seems problematic, but there is an explanation for the different eye colours – an artistic one. In Theo's portrait he probably adjusted the colour of the eyes to match that of the blue background, just as he did not always give his own eyes the same hue of green in the self-portraits, but varied it according to the colour scheme he had chosen. His decision to give himself light blue and not green eyes in cat. 122 is odder. There are no other examples of this,[18] but it turns out that the reason is again an artistic one. The main colours in this portrait are light blue and pale pink, which are rather unusual for Van Gogh, and there was no reason to add green to the colour scheme apart from in the eyes. The latter was evidently not an option, so he omitted green from the palette entirely and gave his eyes the colour of the background, as he had done with Theo's – in his case a greyish light blue.

Finally, if one accepts this identification one sees that the attire of the two men matches their social status. Vincent is wearing an artistic bow tie while Theo has a formal one.[19] One element that is still strange, though, is Theo's straw hat, but that was probably a joke that was echoed in Vincent's self-portrait. He depicted himself with a felt hat, but we know from Andries Bonger that it was not his own hat but Theo's.[20] Vincent did own a straw hat, which was a common item of apparel for artists working out of doors (see cats. 125, 129), and it very much looks as if the brothers are wearing each other's hats.

18 The only other picture in which Van Gogh did not give himself green eyes is ***Self-portrait as a bonze*** (F 476 JH 1581), in which he presented himself as Japanese and made his eyes brown accordingly. The irises are also green in F 366 JH 1345, but Van Gogh did add a lick of blue to them, probably because of the use of that colour elsewhere in the painting.
19 See note 4.
20 This is recorded in Tralbaut 1963 I, p. 48.

Cat. 121

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 85, vol. 2, pl. LXXX; De la Faille 1939, p. 304, no. 420; Bromig-Kolleritz 1954, pp. 33, 44, 98; Hammacher 1960, p. 10; Erpel 1964, pp. 55, 56, no. 12; De la Faille 1970, pp. 144, 622, 623; Hulsker 1977, pp. 262, 264, 266, 267, 272; Hulsker 1980, pp. 262, 264, 266, 267, 272; Amsterdam 1987, p. 329, no. 1.136; Hulsker 1996, pp. 262, 264, 266, 267, 272; Dorn 2005, p. 21; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 73, note 33; Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 39.

EXHIBITIONS
1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1947 Groningen, no. 25; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 73; 1949-50 New York & Chicago, no. 56; 1951 Albi, no. 331; 1953 The Hague, no. 72; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 59; 1955 Antwerp, no. 204; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 112; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 29; 1960 London, no. 15; 1960 Paris II, no. 46?; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 27; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 27; 1963 Sheffield, no. 6; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 23; 1971-72 Paris, no. 30; 1994 Amsterdam, no cat.; 1995 Hamburg, unnumbered; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 22.

Cat. 122

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 85, vol. 2, pl. LXXX; De la Faille 1939, p. 304, no. 421; Bromig-Kolleritz 1954, pp. 33, 36, 44, 97; De la Faille 1958; Hammacher 1960, pp. 9, 10; Erpel 1964, p. 54, no. 8; De la Faille 1970, pp. 148, 623; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 225; Hulsker 1977, pp. 262, 264, 266, 267, 272; Hulsker 1980, pp. 262, 264, 266, 267, 272; Amsterdam 1987, p. 329, no. 1.135; Thomson 1987, p. 23; Van Lindert/Van Uitert 1990, p. 123; Van Tilborgh 1994, p. 6; Hamburg 1995, pp. 96, 97; Hulsker 1996, pp. 262, 264, 266, 267, 272; Dorn 2005, p. 21; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 73, note 33; Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 39.

EXHIBITIONS
1935-36 New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Cleveland, San Francisco, Kansas City, Minneapolis, Chicago & Detroit, no. 16; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1947 Groningen, no. 25; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 75; 1949-50 New York & Chicago, no. 57; 1951 Albi, no. 331; 1953 The Hague, no. 74; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 61; 1955 Antwerp, no. 205; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 113; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 30; 1960 London, no. 16; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 28; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 28; 1963 Sheffield, no. 6; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 24; 1971-72 Paris, no. 31; 1994 Amsterdam, no cat.; 1995 Hamburg, unnumbered; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 21; 1999 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1999-2000 Paris, no. 118.

123
Kingfisher by the waterside

Paris, July-August 1887
Oil on canvas
19.0 x 26.5 cm
Signed at lower left in red:
Vincent
Inv. s 100 V/1962
F 28 JH 1191

Van Gogh depicted several birds during his stay in Paris: a swift, a barn owl and a kingfisher. He made drawings of the first two (fig. 123c) and this small picture of the kingfisher (cat. 123).[1] It is shown by the water's edge, on the lookout for prey.[2] The scene looks as if it is the result of a careful study of nature, but nothing could be further from the truth. It was painted in the studio from a stuffed bird, which still survives (fig. 123a).[3]

Several features of the painting are due to the imitation of that model. In theory it could have been mounted on a stand with feet that later broke off. That, though, is unlikely, because if one lays the bird down it almost automatically adopts the pose seen in the painting. Its supine position also explains why we see so little of its distinctive orange-brown breast, and that cannot be a coincidence.

Painting the supine bird explains why it looks rather unnatural. In real life, kingfishers are far more erect and do not extend their heads so far forward. The colouring is also incorrect. The blue of the kingfisher's plumage is unusual in that it is very bright in the light but darkens in the shade. Although Van Gogh's use of light colours suggests that the scene is in bright sunlight he did not adjust the bird's plumage but reproduced the colour of the stuffed specimen in his dark studio – a dull rather than a bright blue.

There are only a few deviations from the model. Van Gogh gave the bird feet and added a few cursory, light strokes at the bottom of the body. He made the stubby tail much longer than is biologically correct, but he was probably trying to strike a rhythmical balance with the head pointing up towards the right. He also placed the bird on what he may have intended to be reed stems but which actually look more like willow branches stripped of their leaves.[4]

Van Gogh would have got the idea for this scene from Japanese prints, in which birds by the waterside, including kingfishers, were a popular subject.[5] He had several of them in his own collection which could have served as examples (fig. 123b).[6] Those compositions are divided vertically by reed stems, and he imitated that device fairly faithfully. The lack of abrupt truncations and other 'Japanese' characteristics makes it difficult to say whether the drawings of a barn owl and a swift were also made in imitation of Japanese prints (figs. 123c, 123d), but it seems not unlikely. It would certainly help explain his unusual decision to depict birds, which he never did again in this size. The drawings of the barn owl and swift were probably based upon stuffed specimens, but we only know this certainly for the first example, since it was kept in the family (fig. 55a).

Kingfisher by the waterside is on a quite loosely woven, *haute paysage* 3 canvas that was commercially sized and given a double ground consisting of a thin layer of calcium carbonate topped by a thicker layer composed predominantly of lead white (Table 3.3, no. 10). The scene was painted wet-into-wet, largely with buttery paint.

1 The drawings of the barn owl are fig. 123c and F 1373v JH 1189, those of the swift F 1244r JH 1289 and F 1244v JH 1290. See Drawings 3, cats. 307-10, pp. 267-74.
2 Van Gogh was fond of this unusual bird, as shown by his drawing of 1885 (F 1135 JH 468), for which see Drawings 2, cat. 91, pp. 90-92.
3 This was first noted by Vincent Willem van Gogh, who passed the information on to the editors of the revised oeuvre catalogue of 1970 (De la Faille 1970, p. 176). He said that Van Gogh bought the stuffed bird in Paris. The artist had started a collection of stuffed animals in his Nuenen period, and had painted an oil study of a stuffed flying fox (F 177a JH 1192); see Paintings 1, cat. 44, p. 230.
4 It has long been assumed that the bird is perched on a reed, but that branches differently.
5 This connection was first made by Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 181.
6 For a second print with kingfishers see Amsterdam 2006, p. 305, no. 459.
7 De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 19. Vanbeselaere 1937 I, p. 282, though, thought that it was made in Paris.



123 Kingfisher by the waterside



123a Stuffed kingfisher. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



123c *Barn owl viewed from the side* (F 1373r JH 1190), 1887. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



123d Kōno Bairei, *Owl*, from the book *Bairei hyakuchō gafu* (Bairei's sketches of a hundred birds), 1881. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



123b Utagawa Hiroshige II, *Arrowhead and kingfisher*, from the book *Shinsen kachō no kei* (Glimpses of newly selected flowers and birds), c. 1850. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

Van Gogh began with the bird, which he worked up in some detail before executing the water and the 'reeds' with a looser brush. The palette is limited to blue, yellow, ochre, green and some organic red. In order to heighten the contrast a little he added a bright red before the painting was completely dry, which he used for his signature and some strokes in the right foreground.

In 1928 De la Faille believed that *Kingfisher by the waterside* dated from Van Gogh's Nuenen period, but he was soon disabused.[7] It was clearly made in Paris, although not in 1886, as has been assumed until now.[8] We have dated it to the summer of 1887 in view of the stylistic affinity with *Allotment with sunflower* (cat. 114) from the second half of July that year.[9] The dark pinkish red border is a further pointer to such a late date within the Paris oeuvre. Similar red borders are found around landscapes from Asnières (fig. 123e), where Van Gogh had started working in May 1887.[10] Unlike those works, though, the red border around *Kingfisher by the waterside* was not part of the actual scene. It was applied on the edges of the canvas that had been turned over the stretcher when the front of the picture was completely dry. It is exceptional in that Van Gogh painted it with a stable organic red: cochineal on a substrate of aluminium and calcium. That kind of red has only been found in works from the summer of 1886 (cats. 64, 70), where it has retained its colour fairly well.

The canvas was stretched on a frame when Van Gogh started work, as shown by the fact that the cusping coincides with a series of tack-holes. The canvas was removed from the frame at some stage. The pinkish red border continues uninterruptedly over the nail-holes, which it would not have done if the nails had still been present, so the canvas must have been lying flat when the border was painted. A second series of nail-holes which did not cause any cusping shows that it was later attached to a frame again, with the border on the sides.

The decision to colour the sides was probably taken when Van Gogh had the idea of exhibiting the work unframed. Theo quite often showed his brother's work that

8 Vanbeselaere's suggestion of a date in the Paris period (see note 7) was not adopted until De la Faille 1970, p. 176, with the date being proposed as 1886. Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 230, then dated it to the autumn of that year, and that was generally accepted.
9 The drawings of the barn owl and swift are given the rather wider date span of April-September 1887 in Drawings 3, pp. 267-74. The affinity with *Allotment with sunflower* was first noted by Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 230, but she did not go on to draw any conclusions from that regarding the date of *Kingfisher by the waterside*.
10 On this see Van Tilborgh 1995, pp. 163-68.



123e *Fishing in spring, the Pont de Clichy (Asnières)* (F 354 JH 1270), 1887. Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago.

way, and it is known that Vincent had no objections when his work was displayed unframed elsewhere.[11] Unpainted sides disturb a painting's appearance when it is shown without a frame, and that would have given Van Gogh the idea to colour them with a pigment similar to the one used for his red signature. The second series of nails were placed on the extreme edge of the canvas in order to leave the coloured border as pristine as possible.

The painting was restored in 1994-95, when the old wax-resin lining was removed and was not replaced.[12] In order to avoid subjecting the fragile edges to further strain, the painting and the painted edges were laid flat, with the red border not being covered by a frame or mount. Although this is a departure from the original presentation it does do justice to the colour effect Van Gogh intended.

11 As we know from letters 625 and 648, for example, Van Gogh removed his canvases from their stretchers in order to pin them on the wall, send them to Theo, or to reuse the stretchers. See also Van Tilborgh 1995, pp. 170, 171.
12 On the risks attached to wax-resin lining see pp. 31-33.

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Bonger 1890, no. 45 [Martin-Pecheurs]; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 19, vol. 2, pl. VII; Vanbeselaere 1937 I, pp. 282, 414; De la Faille 1939, p. 57, no. 39; De la Faille 1970, pp. 52, 176, 177, 613; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 181, 230; Hulsker 1977, pp. 259, 262; Hulsker 1980, pp. 259, 263; Amsterdam 1987, p. 328, no. 1.128; Van Tilborgh 1995, p. 166; Hulsker 1996, pp. 256, 262; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 114, 115, 119, 124; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 64; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 285, 306.

Exhibitions
1905 Amsterdam I, no. 35 [not for sale]; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 28; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1948 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1954-55 Bern, no. 2; 1955 Antwerp, no. 53; 1957-58 Stockholm, no. 106, Luleå, Kiruna, Umeå, Östersund, Sandviken & Gothenburg, no cat. known; 2005-06 Amsterdam & Pittsburgh, unnumbered.

124
Sunflowers gone to seed

Paris, mid-August-mid-September 1887
Oil on cotton
21.2 x 27.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 121 V/1962
F 377 JH 1328

Van Gogh first painted sunflowers on their own in the late summer of 1887.[1] He depicted them no fewer than four times, of which this is the smallest in the series (figs. 124a-c). He abandoned the traditional formula of flowers in a vase which he had used for his earlier floral still lifes (cats. 67-71), adopting instead an experimental and more decorative design.[2] The sunflowers were probably too heavy for his usual vases (cats. 67-71), so he depicted them lying on an indeterminate surface, probably a table.

Although born of necessity, this composition was not unknown. In addition to bouquets in vases, a tradition sprang up in the 19th century of showing them lying scattered on the ground or a table, seemingly at random, and that was the approach Van Gogh followed here. Each of the four pictures shows two cut sunflowers that have almost finished flowering, apart from in the large horizontal canvas, in which there are four (fig. 124c). He painted them once with their heads towards the viewer (fig. 124a) and modified that in two other versions by turning one of them around (cat. 124, fig. 124b), and combined those two arrangements in the large painting (fig. 124c), reverting to the method he had employed in 1886 for his still lifes of shoes (cat. 73, figs. 73a, 73b).

Sunflowers bloom from roughly the end of July to mid-September, and since the ones in these paintings are already going to seed they would have been painted towards the end of that period in 1887. Van Gogh had already depicted the flower, but only as part of views of the allotments on the hill of Montmartre (see cats. 115, figs. 115a, 115d). He was well aware that the idea of making them the main subject of still lifes was an unusual one, as we know from his remark in a letter from Arles that he had 'taken the sunflower' before other artists had [739].

What was even more original was the way he depicted it. Flowers were always portrayed at the peak of perfection in still lifes, but he showed sunflowers well past that peak, with seeds and withered petals.[3] Unlike most other blooms, this stage in a sunflower's development is both intriguing and picturesque, and that was the real subject of these paintings. As a born realist, Van Gogh had always been interested in objects bearing traces of the wear and tear of everyday life, and that would have been the basis for his unusual decision to depict these rustic flowers in a state of decay.[4] The still lifes are related to his paintings of birds' nests from 1885 and to his muddy, worn-out shoes from 1886 (see cat. 73), in which the quotidian and the weather-beaten are the true subject.[5]

There may have been a more immediate reason for painting the still lifes. Sunflowers were popular as a motif in decorations in France, and Van Gogh knew one example of that. It was in the Bouillon Duval, a cheap restaurant next door to Theo's gallery in boulevard Montmartre.[6] He spoke of it in a letter from the late summer of 1888 when he was planning to make paintings of sunflowers for his

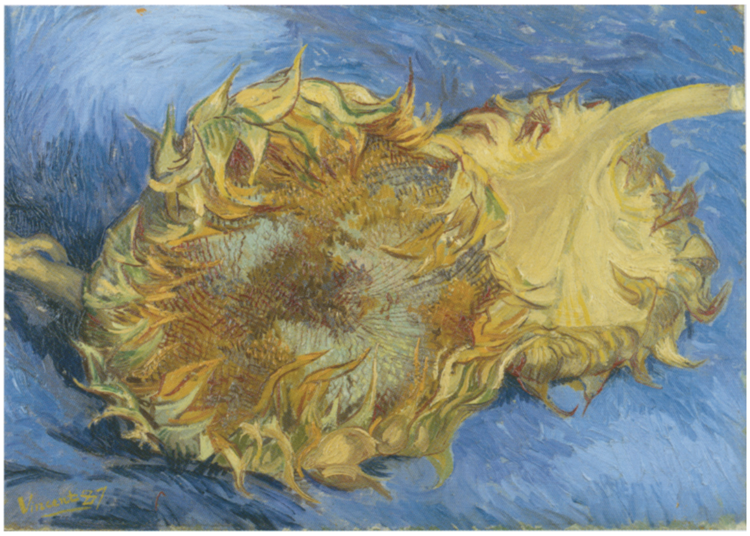
1 In 1886 he had only included some sunflowers in a bouquet in F 250 JH 1166. See Van Tilborgh 2008 for an account of his fascination with sunflowers.
2 His last depictions of flowers in a vase date from the spring of 1887 (F 213 JH 1247, F 322 JH 1292 and F 323 JH 1295).
3 On this see Van Tilborgh 2008, pp. 46-50. There are also rotting flowers in *Vase with Chinese asters and gladioli* (cat. 71), but they do not predominate. They were probably there by chance and were not a deliberate choice.
4 Sunflowers have had a rich symbolism in literature and painting since time immemorial, and some authors believe that Van Gogh wanted to continue that tradition with his still lifes (for a survey see Chicago/Amsterdam 2001-02, pp. 75-78). We do not share that view. Van Gogh only spoke once about the meaning of his sunflower still lifes, and that was in connection with two paintings he had made of them in Arles, when he said that according to him 'they express an idea symbolizing "gratitude"' [853; repeated in 856], but he only gave them that connotation later. His large sunflower pictures of 1888-89 were part of triptychs with *La berceuse* in the middle, and their symbolism was chosen to reinforce the meaning of the central painting, which was intended as a homage to motherhood in general. For the origins of Van Gogh's idea about the triptychs see Van Tilborgh/Hendriks 2001, pp. 20-23, and Van Tilborgh 2008, pp. 56-65.
5 His paintings of birds' nests are F 108 JH 940, F 109r JH 942, F 110 JH 941, F 111 JH 939 and F 112 JH 938 (see Paintings 1, cats. 38, 39).
6 The Bouillon Duval chain consisted of 12 restaurants and was founded by the Paris butcher Pierre Louis Duval (1811-70). This particular establishment was at 21 boulevard Montmartre, next door to Theo's branch of Boussod & Valadon at no. 19 (see letters 502, note 8, and 666, note 5).



124 Sunflowers gone to seed



124a *Sunflowers gone to seed* (F 376 JH 1331), 1887. Bern, Kunstmuseum.



124b *Sunflowers* (F 375 JH 1329), 1887. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

studio.[7] 'Next door to your shop, in the restaurant, as you know, there's such a beautiful decoration of flowers there; I still remember the big sunflower in the window' [666].

That mention of the restaurant in relation to the subject of sunflowers is intriguing, and there may be a connection between them. Van Gogh painted his four Paris still lifes with sunflowers not long after he had lost the venue for exhibiting his flower still lifes (see cats. 84, 102). Agostina Segatori, now his ex-lover, lost her job in Le Tambourin in July 1887, which put an end to his exhibition there. Van Gogh always came up with new ideas after a setback, so it is conceivable that he saw the restaurant in boulevard Montmartre as a suitable new exhibition space, if only because its patrons would have included visitors to Theo's gallery. This might have given him the idea of painting still lifes with sunflowers. They would have fitted in with the decoration in the restaurant, which could help persuade the manager of the value of an exhibition.[8] That kind of opportunism was part of his nature, but even if that really is how the plan unfolded, nothing came of it.[9]

This painting is not on linen but finely woven cotton that is exactly the same fabric as was used for the large still life with sunflowers (fig. 124c) and for two works painted shortly afterwards in the autumn of 1887: *Self-portrait with grey felt hat* (cat. 130) and *Courtesan: after Eisen* (cat. 133) (Table 3.8, nos. 71-73).[10] For the small still life Van Gogh cut a piece of cotton roughly matching the standard *figure* 3 size from the edge of a roll, as shown by the remnants of the selvedge. Before applying the ground he pinned it by the corners to a frame or plank, which distorted the edges a little towards the points of fixture. He again attached it to a stretcher or plank with nails or drawing pins before he started painting, but did so without folding the edges over first. This was the way he used to stretch his canvases flat in Nuenen, and he continued doing so in Paris, but our research has shown that with this sole exception he reserved it for recycled works.

As a ground he applied a layer of barytes (the pigment of barium sulphate), a cheap, whitish inert powder that was artificially manufactured at the time, although here he used a mineral form containing impurities that discoloured it towards beige (p. 110, figs. 23, 24).[11] The mineral barytes was coarsely ground, giving the priming a slightly grainy texture. Barytes spreads easily, and its graininess would have ensured good adhesion of the paint. Exactly the same kind of barytes was used

7 See Van Tilborgh/Hendriks 2001 for Van Gogh's later still lifes with sunflowers.
8 The decorative scheme was probably extensive, because a picture postcard of around 1900 shows that the restaurant was later called Le Soleil, a common synonym for the sunflower (reproduced in Chicago/ Amsterdam 2001-02, p. 51). Van Gogh got his idea of decorating restaurants with still lifes, including flower pieces, while he was living in Antwerp (see letter 547).
9 It was not until the autumn that he found his new exhibition space in Grand Bouillon-Restaurant Du Chalet at 43 avenue de Clichy, which belonged to Etienne-Lucien Martin (see cat. 136). He hung at least two of his sunflower still lifes there (figs. 124a, 124b), which he later exchanged with Gauguin.
10 The canvas weave of cat. 124 is obscured in the X-radiograph by a stripy layer of lead white paint used to adhere the cotton to plywood at a later date. However, the hand thread count given in Table 3.8 was later verified by automated techniques, counting an average of 34.2 vertical and 24.3 horizontal threads per cm. Unpublished report, 'Thread count automation project', compiled by R. Johnson, E. Hendriks and D. Johnson in June 2009.
11 The medium also helps determine the colour; see p. 110.



124c *Four sunflowers gone to seed* (F 452 JH 1330), 1887. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.

for *Self-portrait with grey felt hat* (cat. 130), *Courtesan: after Eisen* (cat. 133) and the large sunflower still life (fig. 124c).

The ground was left visible between the loose brushstrokes, mainly in the background. Analysis of the medium showed that the barytes was mixed with oil and animal glue, which ensured that the layer would dry more quickly than with oil alone while at the same time being less absorbent than a ground with glue alone. A thin layer was enough to temper the absorbent properties of the cotton, making it barely distinguishable from unprepared cotton, partly because of the beige colour.

Van Gogh would have prepared the ground himself. Paint samples show that he added exactly the same coarsely ground barytes to his tube colours (p. 110, figs. 25, 26).[12] Manufacturers also used barytes as a filler for their tube colours, although not as much as found here, and usually of a finer kind. The fact that barytes makes it easier to spread paint came in handy for this small study, which can be regarded as an exercise in rapidly jotting down a painting.

The composition is identical to that of the painting in New York (fig. 124b), which it must have preceded, given its much smaller size. However, it was not the first picture in the series of four. That was the version in Bern (fig. 124a), in which Van Gogh practised with the specific structure of sunflower heads.[13] He adopted a highly graphic, almost draughtsman-like manner, sharply defining the seeds and dried petals around the heart of the flower. In order to add variety to the two heads he made one of them dark and the other one light, so much so that it barely contrasts with the light background.

He changed that with the second work in the series, the one in Amsterdam (cat. 124), by keeping the background dark, turning the right-hand sunflower head away from the viewer and keeping the one on the left light. Unlike the first study he now concentrated on a spontaneous rendering of the colours rather than on recording the separate forms. The flowers are suggested by means of numerous wild dabs of colour that make no distinction between the seeds and the petals.

In the third attempt, the painting in New York (fig. 124b), he retained the composition of the Amsterdam picture and gave it a comparable colour scheme. That is evident not only from the sunflowers themselves but also from the background, which was exactly the same as the preliminary study (cat. 124). It was originally green and greenish blue and was only given its present bright blue later. Unlike

12 This study is the only one of the Paris works examined for this catalogue in which Van Gogh added the barytes himself as a filler. On this see Hendriks 2008, pp. 226, 227.

13 That painting is on top of a self-portrait with a wineglass (fig. 77a), on which see Trembley 1987-88.

the small version, though, he employed the careful, descriptive brushwork of the Bern study. A similar synthesis of the two earlier approaches can be seen in the large, last canvas in the series (fig. 124c), which many people regard as unfinished.[14]

The outer edge of the large flower and the entire small flower were painted first in the work in Amsterdam. Van Gogh used a light turquoise, a colour that also was found in the Bern picture, but there he reserved it for the final strokes. In this painting he used it to give a rough indication of the shapes of the flowers, with the result that the turquoise extended into the background. A bright pink was applied at the spot where the centre of the large bloom on the left was to come. He then painted the contours of the flowers on top of this thin colour notation in dark blue before covering over the turquoise in the background with long strokes of dark green. The bright pink in the heart of the bloom was toned down with a very thin layer of green, and strokes of pink, ochre, pale yellow, olive green and dark brown were then added to the flowers. They were placed on top of and beside eachother in a lively impasto, especially in the yellow and light green hues, aided by the liberal addition of the coarse barytes.

14 Otterlo 2003, p. 182, backs this up by referring to 'the right-hand side', where the underlying canvas is now visible. However, that may not have been the case originally. The colour in this area may have faded to such an extent that it has almost entirely disappeared.

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
Bonger 1890, no. 44 [Tourne-sols gelés]; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 106, vol. 2, pl. CIII; De la Faille 1939, p. 213, no. 275; De la Faille 1970, pp. 174, 175, 626; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 127, note 69, p. 229; Hulsker 1977, pp. 295, 298, 299; Hulsker 1980, pp. 292, 298, 299; Amsterdam 1987, p. 335, no. 1.175; Dorn 1990, p. 278, note 272; Hulsker 1996, pp. 288, 292, 298, 299; Tokyo 1996, pp. 62, 63, 141, no. 9; Dorn 1999, p. 58; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 119, 124; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 52, 54, 55, 60, 71, 73, note 62, p. 74, note 83; Coyle 2007, p. 356; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 60, 285.

EXHIBITIONS
1996 Tokyo, no. 9; 1998 Bern, no cat.; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2003 Tokyo, no. 25.

125
Self-portrait with straw hat

Paris, August-September 1887
Oil on *carton*
41.0 x 33.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 164 V/1962
F 469 JH 1310

Here Van Gogh has depicted himself in light summer clothing without a jacket but with a straw hat on his head. He is not wearing a painter's smock, as has been suggested,[1] but a waistcoat with red piping that can also be seen in three other self-portraits, although there it is combined with a jacket (cat. 122, figs. 97b, 97d).

Van Gogh used a cheap support, as he had done for his preceding self-portraits (cats. 97, 98, 116-20, figs. 116f, 116g), in this case *carton* (see cats. 97, 98). In style it is very close to another self-portrait on *carton* (fig. 125a), in which the background consists of the same kind of short, occasionally slightly curled brushstrokes. It is not easy to date either painting precisely, but since they are more successful and more detailed than his self-portraits on the backs of paintings from Nuenen (cats. 116-20) they would have been painted later.[2] They certainly predate the still lifes with fruit (cats. 126, 127), with their bright colour contrasts and more opaque paint.

The *carton*, which is a standard *figure* 6, is the only one examined for this catalogue to have a double ground, which consists of a layer of lead white beneath another of pale brownish yellow (Table 2).[3] The top layer was applied with a roller, which gave it a grainy texture (p. 99, fig. 8). Van Gogh's choice of this kind of *carton* ties in with the experiments he embarked on at the beginning of 1887, when he began using supports with such a pronounced surface texture.[4] The light colour and the texture of the ground play an important part in the finished picture. They show through in the hat, the clothing and the background, although in the latter case their visibility is also due to fading of the paint, as will be discussed below.

Van Gogh began with a preliminary drawing in charcoal, part of which is visible to the naked eye. He indicated the contours of his face, nose, beard and straw hat with lines of varying density and width. Here and there the dark particles seem to have been picked up by the wet paint on top, giving the impression of a brushed sketch, as in the shadowed side of the beard. He then worked the portrait up with loose, brightly coloured strokes of different lengths.

The study has faded drastically, like his self-portrait from the spring of 1887 (cat. 98). Photographs taken in 1905 and around 1908 show that the background was far darker then (fig. 125b), which means that it was originally closer to his self-portraits from the summer of 1887 (cats. 116-20).[5] Van Gogh made sketchy use of cochineal on a tin substrate in the background, which has faded and become almost transparent, as it has in the more Pointillist self-portrait from the spring of that year (cat. 98).[6] Since he mixed it with some blue pigment in a thin wash covering the background, that was all that was left, as a kind of shadow. Organic red with blue was also used in the waistcoat, and here too the red has faded and become transparent. As a result, the artist's torso looks rather flat compared to the powerfully modelled face and straw hat, but that contrast is unintentional. Like the self-portrait from the spring (cat. 98), Van Gogh enlivened the background by applying strokes

1 Essen/Amsterdam 1990-91, p. 87.
2 In 1928 De la Faille believed that cat. 125 was from the Arles period, but after the correction in Scherjon/De Gruyter 1937, p. 28, note 3, it has always been dated to the latter half of 1887.
3 Exceptionally among the *cartons* examined, this one was mounted on a heavy, cradled panel at a later date.
4 See pp. 98, 99.
5 The other photograph is reproduced in Querido 1905, p. 481.
6 The layer was too thin in the paint sample for the red lake to be identified with HPLC, but the tin substrate indicates the presence of cochineal, which Van Gogh often used at this time.



125 Self-portrait with straw hat



125a *Self-portrait* (F 526 JH 1309), 1887. Detroit, The Detroit Institute of Arts.



125b Eugène Druet, photograph of cat. 125, around 1908. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



125c Detail of a photograph of an exhibition held in Antwerp in 1914. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

of green and blue on the cochineal underlayer after it had dried. The paint of several of them has beaded up, evidently because they did not adhere to the fatty underlayer properly (p. 137, fig. 66). Now that the dark underlayer has disappeared, the green and blue strokes hang suspended in the air as isolated touches of colour. They are very pronounced and compete with the head for the viewer's attention, unintentionally making the work look sketchy and modern.

What has been lost is the care originally devoted to the colour harmony. The purple background and yellow straw hat were a powerful complementary contrast that was repeated in the yellow and purple lines of the waistcoat. The importance of that contrast of purple with yellow emerges from Van Gogh's choice of frame. It was yellow, as can be deduced from remnants of chromate yellow paint found together with the impression of the frame around the edges of the scene.[7] However, Jo van Gogh-Bonger later replaced that frame with a traditional gilt one (fig. 125c), as can be seen in a photograph of an exhibition display in 1914.

7 See Van Tilborgh 1995 for Van Gogh's experiments with coloured frames.

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Bremmer 1909, vol. II, no. 88; Druet 1920, no. 20066; Bremmer 1924, vol. 12, pp. 94, 95, no. 94; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 133, vol. 2, pl. CXXIX; Scherjon/De Gruyter 1937, p. 28, note 3; De la Faille 1939, p. 296, no. 408; Bromig-Kolleritz 1954, p. 99; Hammacher 1960, pp. 10, 11; Erpel 1964, p. 56, no. 13; London 1968-69, p. 69, no. 93; De la Faille 1970, pp. 184, 213, 630; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 125, note 51, 225; Hulsker 1977, pp. 264, 290, 292, 295; Hulsker 1980, pp. 262, 288, 292, 295; Toronto/Amsterdam 1981, pp. 106, 107, no. 7; Amsterdam 1987, p. 334, no. 1.166; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 97; Essen/Amsterdam 1990-91, pp. 87, 89, no. 15; Van Lindert/Van Uitert 1990, p. 123; Hamburg 1995, pp. 116, 117; Hulsker 1996, pp. 262, 288, 292; Tokyo 1997, pp. 42, 43, 133, no. 1; Zemel 1997, p. 149; Shackelford 2000, p. 104, ill. 97; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 120, 124; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 73, note 40; Brescia 2005-06, pp. 369, 370, no. 79; Seoul 2007-08, p. 246; Vienna 2008, pp. 204, 206, 207; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 42, 292, 309.

Exhibitions
1905 Amsterdam I, no. 167 [not for sale]; 1905 Utrecht, no. 45 [not for sale]; 1905 Leiden, no. 45 [not for sale]; 1906 Rotterdam, no. 41; 1906 Middelburg, no cat. [not for sale]; 1908 Munich, no. 40 (not for sale); 1908 Dresden, no. 40 [not for sale]; 1908 Frankfurt am Main, no. 44 (not for sale); 1908 The Hague & Amsterdam, no cat. known, no. 37; 1908 Berlin II, no cat. known [not for sale]; 1911 Amsterdam, no. 55 [not for sale]; 1911-12 Hamburg, no cat. known [not for sale]; 1911-12 Bremen, no cat.; 1912 Dresden & Breslau, no. 2 (not for sale); 1914 Antwerp, no. 70; 1914 Berlin, no. 37; 1914 Cologne & Hamburg, no cat. known; 1920 Venice, no. 28; 1925 The Hague, no cat.; 1929 Amsterdam, no. 29; 1930 Amsterdam, no. 58; 1932 Cologne, no cat. known; 1932 Manchester, no. 39; 1938 London, no. 26; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1946 Copenhagen, no. 29; 1947 Groningen, no. 72; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 107; 1952 Enschede, no. 29; 1952 Eindhoven, no. 35; 1953 The Hague, no. 95; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 64; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 63; 1954 Zürich, no. 28; 1954-55 Willemstad, no. 13; 1955 Palm Beach, Miami & New Orleans, no. 13; 1955 Antwerp, no. 198; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 106; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 27; 1957-58 Leiden & Schiedam, no. 18; 1959 Boston, Milwaukee, Columbus & Minneapolis, no. 2; 1960 London, no. 8; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 36; 1968-69 London, no. 93; 1969 Vlissingen, no. 9; 1970 Munich & Paris, no. 20 [only Munich]; 1971 Saarbrücken, no. 132; 1971-72 Paris, no. 52; 1972 Bordeaux, no. 14; 1972-73 Strasbourg & Bern, no. 16; 1975 Paris & Amsterdam, no. 121; 1981 Toronto & Amsterdam, no. 7; 1990-91 Essen & Amsterdam, no. 15 [only Essen]; 1991 Antwerp, no. 96; 1994 Amsterdam, no cat.; 1995 Hamburg, unnumbered; 1997 Tokyo, no. 1; 1999 Atlanta, Seattle & Denver, no. 64; 2002 Sapporo & Kobe, no. 27; 2005-06 Brescia, no. 79; 2006-07 Amsterdam & New York, unnumbered [only Amsterdam]; 2007-08 Seoul, unnumbered; 2008 Vienna, no. 42.

126 Apples

127 Grapes

126
Paris, September-October 1887
Oil on canvas
45.5-45.7 x 60.2-60.4 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 131 V/1962
F 254 JH 1342

Underlying image:
indeterminate
After March 1886

127
Paris, September-October 1887
Oil on canvas
33.0 x 46.3 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 194 V/1962
F 603 JH 1336

Van Gogh's output fell off sharply after *Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette* (cat. 115) of late july 1887. He had made around 60 paintings between May and September, but in the following six months he produced no more than 30. This decline in productivity closely paralleled a change in subject matter. With one or two exceptions he did not paint any landscapes or street scenes between roughly September 1887 and his departure for Arles in February 1888, but restricted himself to portraits, self-portraits, still lifes and three copies after Japanese prints (cats. 124-37).[1]

This decision to abandon *plein-air* painting had no effect at all on his creativity. The works he produced in his studio in the final six months of his stay in Paris show him striking out in a new direction in collaboration with Emile Bernard, who returned to Paris from Pont-Aven that autumn.[2] Van Gogh's friend had now rejected Neo-Impressionism and was proclaiming new ideas about the future direction that modern painting should take.[3] He was looking for a far-reaching stylisation combined with a simple, bold use of colour composed as far as possible of 'whole' colours, that is to say the three primaries and three secondaries.[4] He was partly inspired in this by Japanese prints, and experimented with fairly evenly filled areas of colour without any gradations in tone (fig. 126a).

Evidently encouraged by Bernard's ideas, Van Gogh simplified his own palette even further in this period. He also applied his colours far more evenly, and began using them more thickly and broadly. Unlike Bernard, though, he combined this search for a bolder use of colour with 'haloing'.[5] This involved placing colours side by side so that they reinforced each other through their optical effect, as Charles Blanc had explained in his *Grammaire des arts du dessin*.[6] This technique had been raised to the status of dogma by the Neo-Impressionists, but Van Gogh did not follow their example literally. He used streaks instead of small dabs and dots, as a result of which his colours began shimmering strongly.

Those experiments are well illustrated by five related still lifes of fruit, three of which are in the Van Gogh Museum (cats. 126-28, figs. 126b, 126c).[7] In addition to apples, lemons and the occasional orange they feature pears, grapes and quinces, so we know that they were painted in the autumn.[8] *Quinces*, in which the fruit are displayed on a pale drapery against a brownish surface, possibly a wall, was undoubtedly the first one in the series (fig. 126b). The brushstrokes are broad and thick, but the halo effect of intense adjoining colours is lacking, apart from in the foreground, where there are bright strokes in several different colours. Van Gogh then applied that method consistently in *Apples* (cat. 126), in which the brushwork undulates

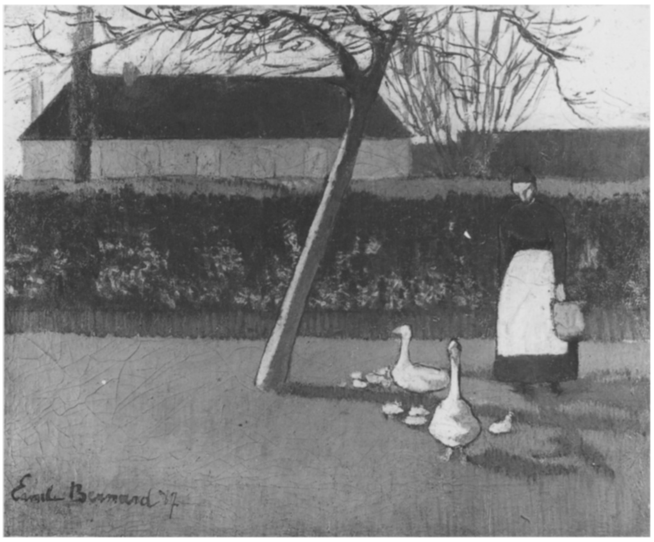
1 For the exceptions see p. 82, note 125.
2 See p. 82, note 127, for the date of his return.
3 For an explanation of his ideas see pp. 80-85.
4 For this term see cat. 137.
5 Van Gogh used this term twice in his correspondence: 'As for stippling, making halos or other things, I find that a real discovery' [669], and 'One of the decorations of sunflowers on a royal blue background has a "halo", that's to say, each object is surrounded by a line of the colour complementary to the background against which it stands out' [668].
6 Blanc 1867, p. 606. Colours had a far greater range than the passage that was actually filled with a specific colour. They were surrounded by a halo of their complementary 'counter-colour', as it were.
7 Bernard 1952 I, p. 318.
8 Van Gogh included the entire series, or at least some of the works, in his exhibition in Etienne-Lucien Martin's restaurant at the end of 1887, for according to Bernard 1924, p. 241, Vincent's 'brutal still lifes' ('natures mortes violentes') hung there.



126 Apples



127 Grapes



126a Emile Bernard, *Woman with geese*, 1887. Private collection.

markedly. As in *Quinces*, the fruit are displayed on a cloth extending upwards in a diagonal, but now there is no suggestion of a rear wall.

Apples was painted on top of another work of which nothing can be seen in the paint surface. It is true that there are brushstrokes in the background that do not belong to the surface picture, but it is impossible to say whether they are part of the first painting. The strokes closely resemble those in the background of *Quinces*, so it is very conceivable that Van Gogh originally wanted a similar background and only decided on the present, less descriptive one while he was painting. Examination under raking light and in an X-radiograph revealed nothing at all about the underlying image. However, the loosely woven *paysage* 12 canvas, which is of rather poor quality, does show that it was painted in Paris (Table 3.5, no. 50, and Table 5). It was covered over with a streaky layer that varied in colour from black to purplish grey.[9] Van Gogh then painted an even white layer on top which contains zinc white in addition to lead white and very little barium sulphate. In common with other works with a covering layer containing zinc white (cats. 99-102, 129), the presence of this slow-drying pigment has led to unsightly drying cracks in *Apples*.

The painting was probably laid in without a preliminary drawing. There are small patches in the apples of a thin, loose colour design in various hues: blue, green, pink and red. The scene was then worked up, with the complementary contrast between the red of the apples and the blue-green of the background being the key component. Van Gogh also applied local colour contrasts, further unifying the scene. The background consists of every conceivable hue of green and blue, from turquoise and a deep greenish blue to a deep dark blue mixed from a variety of pigments including Prussian blue, French ultramarine, cerulean blue, chrome yellow and emerald green, on top of which there are short contrasting strokes of pale yellow, red, orange and pink. These colour combinations are also found in the apples, but then in the reverse order.

All the brushstrokes are hatched. In the apples they follow the curvature of the fruit, whereas in the cloth they are mostly horizontal, so that the drapery folds are suggested by differences in colour alone. It is mainly at the top that there is an undulating pattern that parts and flows around the red apples like a shimmering green-blue halo, with Van Gogh almost literally depicting his haloing. This interplay between colour and brushstroke came about gradually. He went back and forth between the apples and the background, piling wet-into-wet hatchings one on top of the other to create a thick layer of paint.

9 The editors of De la Faille's oeuvre catalogue wrongly took this layer to be an initial version of the still life made in Nuenen which Van Gogh only got around to finishing in the autumn of 1887 (De la Faille 1970, p. 130). Two samples incorporating this layer showed it to contain French ultramarine, an orange-fluorescing organic red (with aluminium and sulphur in the substrate) and a little vermilion and lead white.

126b *Quinces* (F 602 JH 1343), 1887. Dresden, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen.



126c *Grapes, lemons, pears and apples* (F 382 JH 1337), 1887. Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago.



Van Gogh pursued the abstraction of the background even further in the smaller *Grapes* (cat. 127). He does suggest that it is a cloth on a table that extends up a rear wall, but the indication is achieved solely with a change in the direction of the brushstrokes, from vertical at the top to diagonal below. This is then contradicted by the fact that we look down almost vertically on the bowl with the fruit, as a result of which this work appears much flatter and more decorative than the other two. It can be regarded as Van Gogh's first, albeit very cautious attempt to follow Bernard by stylising in the manner of Japanese prints. Although he worked with the complementary colour contrast of purple grapes against an ochre-yellow background, he did not use vibrating, haloing brushwork, nor are the colour contrasts particularly emphatic. This appears to have been done in imitation of Bernard (fig. 126a), who may also have inspired him to fill in the foreground and background with parallel brushstrokes, following the example of Cézanne.

This *basse paysage* 8 still life is on a rather inferior, loosely woven canvas (Table 3.5, no. 25). It was given a commercial ground consisting of lead white and calcium

carbonate with the addition of some orange ochre and carbon black to colour it a pale pink. Van Gogh first applied a transparent blue underlayer that is visible here and there between and within the grapes (p. 153, fig. 12). Its colour ranged from pale greyish blue to dark blue, with no clear relationship between the shifting density and shade of the underpaint and the finished scene. That layer served as the basis for the modelling with colour, with the blue being covered locally with white and reinforced elsewhere with an opaque light blue.

Van Gogh then loosely indicated the contours of the purple grapes and stems with a fluid organic red before filling in the contours of the fruit with thin purple and crimson. He also worked with thick whitish paint consisting mainly of zinc white, which he applied on top of the underlying blue while it was still wet, as can be seen in paint cross-sections. Raking light reveals that the bottom edge of the bunch, in particular, was thickly accentuated. The light edge of the bowl was also laid in with this same impasted white. It can be seen from the yellowish green bunch of grapes in the foreground that Van Gogh sketched the fruit with light blue on top of the blue underlayer, although this time opaquely. He indicated some contours with dark blue at the same time.

He gave the scene its final colours once the sketch and the impasted zinc white had dried. He did so systematically, always working with a single colour in each part of the scene before moving on to the next. The background was executed in chrome yellow, which was mixed with various other pigments for the finer nuances. It was originally yellower, because the chrome yellow has taken on a brownish yellow cast here and there (see cats. 106, 115 for this discolouration). The touches of organic red in the foreground bunch of grapes have generally retained their colour well. Compared to the background, Van Gogh worked with fine brushes for the grapes, and it is noticeable that only the purple fruit has parallel hatchings. The strokes follow the curvature in the yellow grapes. Finally, a few, generally contrasting accents were added when the paint was thoroughly dry, such as the warm orange-red on some of the purple grapes.

Van Gogh did not concentrate on even areas of colour for a while after *Grapes* but on stylising the haloing with colour and brushwork, as can be seen in *Quinces, lemons, pears and grapes* (cat. 128) and *Grapes, lemons, pears and apples* (fig. 126c). In both works, which are larger than the previous still lifes, he consistently painted with shimmering colours, as he had done in *Apples* (cat. 126). In *Quinces, lemons, pears and grapes* (cat. 128) they are mainly different hues of a single colour (yellow), while in *Grapes, lemons, pears and apples* (fig. 126c) he combined the dominant complementary contrast from *Grapes*, purple and yellow with the contrast between blue and orange. The leaves, pears and apples were added later and were clearly inspired by the Japanese model, for they are flatter and have pronounced contours.[10] Bernard was by now imitating Japanese prints more and more dogmatically (fig. 135a), and Van Gogh was following his friend's development closely, although without always or literally adopting his solutions to specific problems.[11]

10 Information about the technical structure of the painting was provided by Kristin Lister of The Art Institute of Chicago.

11 Van Gogh was full of praise for still lifes by Bernard in letters 600 and 655, and was probably referring to fig. 135a and the painting now in the Kunsthalle in Bremen (Luthi 1982, pp. 31, 154). Contrary to the custom in Japanese woodcuts, Van Gogh gave shadows to the fruit that he later added to *Grapes, lemons, pears and apples* (fig. 126c), and also made them very dark.

Cat. 126

Provenance
1887-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1917-19 on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam?; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1927-30 on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; 1962 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1931-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Literature
Bonger 1890, no. 57 [Pommes]; Druet 1920, no. 7226; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 75, vol. 2, pl. LXIX; De la Faille 1939, p. 216, no. 281; London 1968-69, p. 68, no. 89; De la Faille 1970, pp. 130, 131, 621; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 111, 126, note 64, 231; Hulsker 1977, pp. 296, 298, 302, 303; Hulsker 1980, pp. 296, 298, 302, 303; London 1979-80, p. 81, no. 97; Amsterdam 1987, p. 337, no. 1.182; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 85; Hulsker 1996, pp. 288, 296, 298, 302, 303; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 68; Coyle 2007, pp. 345, 347; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 62, 285, 306.

Exhibitions
1903 Wiesbaden, no. 10 [not for sale]; 1905 Berlin I, ex catalogue [DM. 1,500]; 1905 Amsterdam I, no. 56 [not for sale]; 1905 Utrecht, no. 17 [not for sale]; 1905 Leiden, no. 17 [not for sale]; 1906 Rotterdam, no. 17; 1906 Middelburg, no cat. [not for sale]; 1908 Paris, no. 14 [Ffr. 3,000]; 1908 Munich, no. 11 (Dfl. 1,200); 1908 Dresden, no. 11 [Dfl. 1,200]; 1908 Frankfurt am Main, no. 14 (for sale); 1908 Berlin II, no cat. known [Dfl. 2,000]; 1908 The Hague & Amsterdam, no cat. known, no. 36; 1914 Antwerp, no. 22; 1914 Berlin, no. 19; 1914 Cologne & Hamburg, no cat. known; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 44; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 33; 1947 Prague, no cat. known; 1947 Groningen, no. 30; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 60; 1954 Zürich, no. 16; 1954-55 Bern, no. 23; 1955 Antwerp, no. 174; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 86; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 20; 1956 Leeuwarden, no. 15; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 19; 1968-69 London, no. 89; 1971-72 Paris, no. 24; 1979-80 London, no. 97; 1980 Washington, no. 68.

Cat. 127

Provenance
1887-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1927-30 on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; 1962 Vincent van Gogh Foundation (ratified in 1982); 1931-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Literature
Bonger 1890, no. 41 [Raisins]?; Druet 1920, no. 20117; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, pp. 169, 170, vol. 2, pl. CLXVI; Scherjon/De Gruyter 1937, p. 28, note 3; De la Faille 1939, p. 243, no. 326; De la Faille 1970, pp. 186, 244, 635; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 162, 231; Hulsker 1977, pp. 296, 298, 300, 301; Hulsker 1980, pp. 296, 298, 300, 301; Amsterdam 1987, p. 337, no. 1.181; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 106; Paris 1988, pp. 158, 159, no. 60; Hulsker 1996, pp. 288, 296, 298, 300, 301; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 120, 124; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 66; Seoul 2007-08, p. 246; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 62, 285, 307.

Exhibitions
1905 Amsterdam I, no. 91 [Dfl. 800]; 1905 Hamburg, no. 48 [Dfl. 950]; 1905 Dresden, no. 44; 1905 Berlin II, no cat.; 1906 Vienna, no. 33 (for sale); 1908 Paris, no. 16 [Ffr. 2,500]; 1908 Munich, no. 26 (Dfl. 1,000); 1908 Dresden, no. 26 [Dfl. 1,000]; 1908 Frankfurt am Main, no. 28 (for sale); 1908 Zürich, no. 20; 1908 The Hague & Amsterdam, no cat. known, no. 41; 1908 Berlin II, no cat. known [Dfl. 1,500]; 1909-10 Munich, no. 18, Frankfurt am Main, Dresden & Chemnitz, no cat. known [Dfl. 1,900]; 1910 Leiden, no cat. known; 1911 Amsterdam, no. 15 [Dfl. 2,500]; 1920 New York, no. 56 [$7,000]; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 58; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 36; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 108; 1988 Paris, no. 60; 1998-99 Enschede, no cat.; 2007-08 Seoul, unnumbered.

128
Quinces, lemons, pears and grapes

Paris, September-October 1887
Oil on canvas
48.9 x 65.5 cm, frame: 67 x 84 cm
Signed and annotated at bottom left, in orange and red respectively:
Vincent 87 / a mon frère Theo
Inv. s 23 V/1962
F 383 JH 1339

Underlying image: landscape (?)
After March 1886

Letters 668, 669

In this painting, a single orange, several lemons, quinces, pears and white grapes are laid out on an undulating, rumpled cloth that is barely recognisable as such. It fills the entire picture surface and is highly decorative, although there is some suggestion of space and depth at the bottom. Like *Apples* (cat. 126), the colours are bright and the background is agile. Van Gogh departed from the approach he adopted in the two preceding still lifes (cats. 126, 127) by avoiding any marked colour contrasts and building the composition up with different shades of a single colour: yellow. The challenge was to employ closely related hues without masking the forms too much with this *ton-sur-ton* or 'clair sur clair' manner,[1] because they require contrasts in either colour or tone, or both. Van Gogh was only forced to use the former for the fruit and their shadows, where he employed green against red and orange against blue. The distinction between the forms is mainly due to the highly differentiated brushwork.

Van Gogh had already experimented a little with placing closely related yellows up against each other in his *Three novels* of early 1887 (cat. 82), but that is where the similarities end. The fruit still life must be seen above all in relation to Louis Anquetin's *Harvest* from the summer of 1887 (fig. 128b). It had been painted in Etrepagny, and when Anquetin returned to Paris in September Van Gogh's friend Bernard hailed it as a stimulating example of a new, modern style.[2] Anquetin depicted the countryside 'through a yellow windowpane', as the critic Dujardin wrote the following year, and in order to evoke the bright summer sunlight even more convincingly he 'reduced the tones of the different compartments making up the painting to the general range; not the complementaries, which would destroy the unity'.[3] Van Gogh clearly wanted to replicate that effect of flooding sunlight in this still life, but unlike Anquetin he did not use fairly uniform areas of colour. Instead he adhered to the Neo-Impressionist invention of evoking shimmering light by means of streaks, as he had done in *Apples* (cat. 126) and *Grapes* (cat. 127).

This still life was painted over another work, probably a landscape. The canvas is of good quality and has a ground consisting mainly of lead white (Table 3.5, no. 53). Since that is typical of the works from the Paris period it is likely that the underlying image was painted there too. The colours of that scene are clearly visible at the edges. There are mainly greens at the bottom and blue with pale pink, purple and white at the top.[4] That first scene was later covered with dark paint (p. 153, fig. 13), which Van Gogh sometimes used as a first layer to block out recycled canvases (cats. 95, 102, 126, and Table 5). He might mix it from paint residues, whatever came to hand, and that was also the case here, for it has a completely different composition at different places.

The advantage of dark layers of that kind is that they totally eliminated the underlying image, but the drawback is that they disqualified the ground as a source of

1 Van Gogh applied the term 'clair sur clair' to his yellow *Sunflowers* (F 454 JH 1562; letter 666), for which see Van Tilborgh/Hendriks 2001, pp. 39-42.
2 Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov discussed the reputation of Anquetin's painting in Toronto/Amsterdam 1981, p. 237, and stated that he returned to Paris before 8 September 1887 (p. 228). Bernard praised it in his later articles on Anquetin (Bernard 1994, vol. 1, pp. 262, 263, 273, 274), and also assessed the influence it had on the work of Van Gogh, who had expressed his admiration for it in the summer of 1888 (letter 628).
3 Dujardin 1888, p. 491: '[...] à travers une vitre jaune [...] les tons des différents compartiments qui composent le tableau sont ramenés à la gamme générale; pas de complémentaires qui détruiraient l'unité'.
4 There are also traces of these colours on the inside of the frame, as discussed below. The green is chrome green, which is a ready-made mixture of chrome yellow and Prussian blue.



128 Quinces, lemons, pears and grapes



128a Jules Bastien-Lepage, *The little communicant*, 1874-75. Tournai, Musée des Beaux-Arts.



128b Louis Anquetin, *The harvest* (*The mower at noon*), 1887. Private collection.

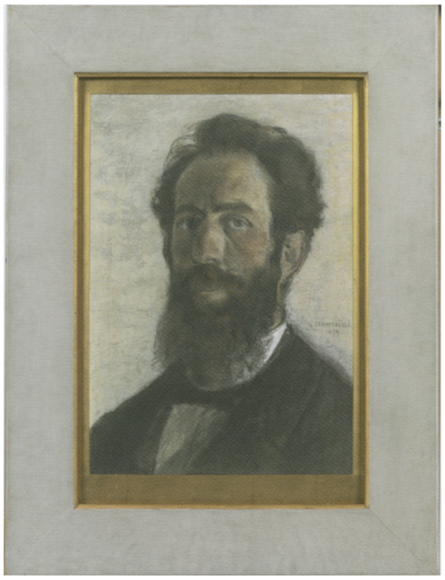
luminosity in the scene painted on top. That is why Van Gogh had switched to light paint for the covering layer in the autumn of 1886 (see cats. 75, 77, and Table 5), but he did not do so here. He evidently preferred to build up his composition of vibrating light yellows directly on top of a dark undertone, and only used a few white strokes as a local base where he needed extra luminosity.

The fruit are mainly depicted with hatchings supplemented with alternately delicate and rough stippling. As was the case with *Apples* (cat. 126), which he painted shortly beforehand, there are firm brushstrokes in the background, but this time they are not horizontal but arc around the fruit almost like a whirlpool. The distinctive feature here is the use of dry, sandy paint through which the brush was dragged to create an almost crusty texture – an effect which Van Gogh later employed in an even more extreme form in his *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 137).

The yellows contain an abundance of chrome yellow, often mixed with the light variant of zinc yellow. The delicate hatchings on the lemons, the signature and the date are in red lead that has darkened. They were originally a bright orange but are now dark ochre (p. 153, figs. 58, 59). The orange is now only visible at points in the signature where the paint has worn away a little, providing a glimpse beneath the surface of the paint layer.[5] The broad, brownish yellow strokes in the foreground have probably discoloured, but it is not known which pigment was used here. The signature and date were applied on paint that had already dried, as was the bright red dedication to Van Gogh's brother: 'a mon frère Theo'.[6]

One can only speculate as to why Van Gogh dedicated this work to Theo. It can be deduced that the inscription was added in the winter of 1887-88 from a later remark by the latter's widow, Jo van Gogh-Bonger, who said that it was done to thank Theo for his decision to start treating Vincent just as he did the other modern painters from whom he bought work.[7] It is known that Theo greatly increased Vincent's

5 The orange paint has also taken on a gritty texture due to conversion of the red lead pigment to lead soaps. On this degradation, see p. 134.
6 Most of the paint of the letter 'm' has worn off.
7 Jo van Gogh-Bonger suggested that Vincent made the painting after Theo had sold some pictures by 'young artists to help them' in the winter of 1887-88, and 'wanted to do the same for Vincent', but since the painting was made before then this must refer to the dedication (Letters 1958, vol. 1, p. XLII).



128c Jean-Francois Raffaëlli, *Self-portrait*, 1879. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



128d Edgar Degas, *The collector of prints*, 1866. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



128e *Portrait of Julien Tanguy* (F 364 JH 1352), 1887. Private collection.

allowance around now,[8] so it looks as though the latter dedicated this painting to his brother in gratitude for recognising his potential as an avant-garde artist.

It was perhaps no coincidence that Van Gogh chose this exercise in *ton-sur-ton* painting as a gift for his brother. Prior to his arrival in Paris he had thought that a tonal approach was incompatible with a colourful palette. Theo tried persuading him to paint bright works in the manner of the Impressionists, but Van Gogh could only think that that meant adding white to his palette, as some of the Hague School painters had done. This achieved unity of tone while adding some brightness, but it weakened the colours, and Van Gogh did not want to do that. He preferred a low chromatic range, and believed that one could only have bright paintings if the subject demanded white. For example, just before sending Theo his dark *Potato eaters* he had told him that 'I really do' like 'light paintings', which is why he admired Jules Bastien-Lepage's *Little communicant* of 1874-75 (fig. 128a), which was 'entirely white on white' [500].[9] He called it 'magnificent', and when Theo understandably dismissed his tonal potato still lifes with their 'brown-grey theme' in the autumn of 1885 [536],[10] Vincent again stressed 'what singular paintings some modern colourists purposely made with white on white' [536]. He only realised that he had the wrong end of the stick when he saw the work of the Impressionists and Neo-Impressionists. A tonal yet colourful expression was perfectly possible with pigments other than white alone, and *Quinces, lemons, pears and grapes* is a very good illustration of that. In short, the painting was proof that Theo had been right all along, and that would have been one of the reasons for dedicating it to him.

The frame, which Van Gogh painted himself, is unique. It is known that Theo had frames put around his brother's best paintings, but this is the only one to have survived.[11] However, it was not made specially for this still life, because it bears traces of paint from the underlying scene on the rebate, although we do not know precisely what it looked like then. Paint cross-sections show that the colour of the frame was changed several times, but it is only partly possible to reconstruct when those changes were made. The wood was first covered with a layer of calcium carbonate, which was topped with a pale orange layer consisting of orange ochre and

8 Letters 2009: *Biographical & historical context. 3. The financial background, 3.3: Vincent's income and expenditure*.
9 Bastien-Lepage's painting hung in the Paris Salon of 1875, which Van Gogh visited (letter 34).
10 These still lifes are discussed in Paintings 1, cats. 3-34, pp. 164-81. Significantly, Van Gogh spoke in the same letter about a winter scene by Louis Apol, which was again 'white on white' and which he called 'deuced fine' [536]. It was *Sunset in the Haagse Bos* of 1875, which he saw on his visit to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam in October 1885.
11 The history of the frames around Van Gogh's works from Theo's collection is traced in Van Tilborgh 1995, pp. 170-80.

silicates.[12] There is a bright red layer made up of red lead and vermilion on the inner edge of the frame, but it is not clear whether that belonged to the original decoration or was added by Van Gogh later as a border for the landscape that was the initial scene. In any event, this simple orangey yellow frame must have been intended as a compromise between the ornately decorated, curlicued variants in gold found at the Salon and the coloured, usually white frames with a simple form introduced by the Impressionists (fig. 128c).[13] Intermediate forms of both extremes were quite common (fig. 128d), although Van Gogh's was a very cheap variant indeed, being more of a passe-partout than a frame.[14]

Even if he had used the frame for his landscape, he retained it after he had painted the still life, as we know from the *Portrait of Julien Tanguy* (fig. 128e), where this work is depicted in the background in a frame with a red inner edge.[15] In order to blend frame and still life even further he then painted the frame and the inner edge light yellow with a mixture consisting mainly of zinc yellow and added a few touches of chrome yellow on top to enliven the effect (p. 132, fig. 56). Those strokes have now discoloured to a greenish, rather dark colour that stands out against the underlying light yellow. They are a little angular and appear to have been loosely inspired by Japanese characters in an abstract anticipation of *Flowering plum orchard: after Hiroshige* and *Bridge in the rain: after Hiroshige* (cats. 131, 132), the borders of which are decorated with genuine Japanese characters. This made the frame of the still life far more artistic, and that, together with the dedication, is probably why Theo's widow was so fond of the painting. She never put it up for sale, at any rate.

12 The sides of the frame are not pale orange but a bright blue composed of cobalt blue and ultramarine. This was later covered with a bronze paint (containing copper and zinc), probably in the 20th century, and later still with a brownish black.
13 They did not like gold, because it reflected the light, however matt it was. Camille Pissarro, for example, decided to 'brown' his gilt frames; see Waschek 1995 II, p. 142.
14 On this subject see Cahn 1995, pp. 131-34, Waschek 1995 II, pp. 142-46, and Callen 2000, pp. 191-201.
15 He put a red border around several scenes from the summer of 1887 on. Some examples are given in Van Tilborgh 1995, pp. 166, 167, and by Pickvance in Martigny 2000, p. 145.

PROVENANCE
1887-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1917-19 on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam?; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1926 on loan to the Museum Mesdag, The Hague; 1962 Vincent van Gogh Foundation (ratified in 1982); 1962-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

LITERATURE
Van Gogh-Bonger 1914, p. L; Druet 1920, no. 7222; Colin 1925, pl. 18; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 107, vol. 2, pl. CIV; De la Faille 1939, p. 240, no. 320; Nordenfalk 1948, p. 86; Letters 1958, p. XLIII; London 1968-69, p. 68, no. 88; Orton 1969, pp. 16, 18; De la Faille 1970, pp. 176, 626; Orton 1971, pp. 6, 8, 9, 9, note 23; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 110, 126, note 61, 127, note 68, 231; Hulsker 1977, pp. 296, 298, 302; Hulsker 1980, pp. 296, 298, 302; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 192, 193, 336, no. 1.179; Amsterdam 1988, pp. 106, 107, no. 45; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 91; Amsterdam 1990, pp. 86, 87, no. 28; Heijbroek 1991, p. 208, ill. 50; Van Tilborgh 1995, p. 164; Coyle 1996, p. 119; Hulsker 1996, pp. 288, 296, 298, 302; Amsterdam 2003, pp. 112, 132, 280, no. 145; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 120, 124; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, p. 68; Coyle 2007, pp. 346-48; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 64, 306; Letters 2009, letter 668, notes 3, 4, letter 669, note 2, letter 734, note 3.

EXHIBITIONS
1905 Amsterdam I, no. 53 [not for sale]; 1908 Munich, no. 8 (not for sale); 1908 Dresden, no. 8 [not for sale]; 1908 Frankfurt am Main, no. 11 (not for sale); 1908 The Hague & Amsterdam, no cat. known, no. 58; 1908 Berlin II, no cat. known [not for sale]; 1911 Amsterdam, no. 25 [not for sale]; 1911-12 Hamburg, no cat. known [not for sale]; 1911-12 Bremen, no cat.; 1912 Dresden & Breslau, no. 17 (not for sale); 1914 Antwerp, no. 65; 1914 Berlin, no. 34; 1914 Cologne & Hamburg, no cat. known; 1925 The Hague, no cat.; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 22; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 22; 1963 Humlebæk, no. 17; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 17; 1968-69 London, no. 88; 1988 Amsterdam, no. 45; 1990 Amsterdam, no. 28; 1995 Amsterdam & Vienna, no. 147; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 38; 1999 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1999-2000 Paris, no. 114; 2003 Amsterdam I, no. 145; 2010-11 Tokyo, Fukuoka & Nagoya, no. 67.

129
Self-portrait with pipe and straw hat

Paris, September-October 1887
Oil on canvas
41.9 x 30.0 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 163 V/1962
F 524 JH 1565

Underlying image: study of a head
November 1884-May 1885

There is another scene beneath this self-portrait of Van Gogh with a pipe, straw hat and smock. Raking light reveals several underlying, impasted brushstrokes, and they can also be seen in the X-radiograph. That first composition, which looks like a portrait, consisted largely of dark, blackish paint, as can be seen in areas of paint loss and drying cracks in the present picture surface. Paint cross-sections have shown that the earlier work was executed with a mixture of Naples yellow, various ochres and probably Prussian blue. Those pigments are typical of Van Gogh's work from Nuenen, so this was almost certainly a study of a head from his Brabant period.

Van Gogh prepared to recycle that painting in the spring of 1887, together with four other studies of peasant men or women from Nuenen (cats. 99-101, fig. 103b).[1] He blocked them all out with a layer of white consisting of a mixture of lead white, barium sulphate, zinc white and the highly unusual white pigment known as bone white (calcium phosphate). That, at any rate, is the mixture encountered beneath four of the five overpainted works.[2] Two or possibly three of the canvases were cut from the same roll (cats. 100-01 and possibly this work, cat. 129), and all have a double ground of a layer of calcium carbonate with a little lead white covered with a layer of lead white with calcium carbonate and zinc white.

Van Gogh first drew the main contours and features of his self-portrait on the white covering layer, probably with graphite. He was faithful to that sketch, which is clearly visible through the picture surface, except on the right side of the hat, which he widened considerably. He first painted the background, leaving a reserve for the hat, head and shoulders, before starting on his face, hat and smock and then completing the scene. The final brushstrokes consist of a few corrections to the beard and the addition of the pipe.

The palette is limited to yellow, orange, brown, pink, blue-green and grey-green. Some of the paint came directly from the tube, some was mixed with white and some consists of mixed colours – by the forehead and bridge of the nose, for instance, where the grey-brown shaded areas are grey-green with pink. The beard is built up with various shades of orange, but the darkest one appears to be due to the discolouration of what is probably the orangey pigment chrome yellow. The pipe was painted with red lake and vermilion, but it too has darkened. The background may have changed, too, as its current colour – white – has no parallels in Van Gogh's portraits or self-portraits. Although there is no direct physical evidence for this, we have to allow for the possible fading of a fugitive yellow or red lake pigment mixed with the white.

The self-portrait, which always had a flat wooden frame (fig. 97g), has been dated to both the Paris and the Arles periods since the beginning of the 20th century.[3] The latter date would have been based on Van Gogh's summer clothing, reinforced

1 For the underlying works, the canvas used and the blocking layer see Table 5 and the relevant entries, especially cats. 99, 100, note 5, and cat. 101, notes 26-28.
2 The only one for which the intermediate layer has not been analysed is F 583 JH 1263 (fig. 103b). See cat. 101, note 28, for further technical details.
3 The self-portrait was assigned to the Arles period in Munich 1910, no. 32, but Berlin 1914, no. 38, states that it was painted in Paris. De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 150, once again opted for Arles, but he corrected that in the second edition of his book (De la Faille 1939, p. 306), possibly in response to Scherjon/De Gruyter 1937, p. 28, note 3. However, the editors of the 1970 edition of De la Faille placed it in 1888, and felt that they were supported in this by Bromig-Kolleritz 1954 (pp. 108, 109) and Hammacher 1960 (p. 11). Jan Hulsker queried that traditional dating in the last edition of his oeuvre catalogue (Hulsker 1996, p. 358), possibly basing himself on Welsh-Ovcharov in Toronto/ Amsterdam 1981, p. 106, in which it was again suggested that it was painted in 1887, as was done in Tokyo 1996, p. 138.



129 Self-portrait with pipe and straw hat



129a *Self-portrait* (F 319 JH 1333), 1887. Basel, Kunstmuseum Basel, on loan from the H.C. Emile Dreyfus-Stiftung.

by the unusual background colour of white, but it is now known that it was definitely not painted in the south of France. It is on top of a study of a head from Nuenen, and Van Gogh did not take any canvases with him when he went to Arles.[4] In addition, he worked with thick, 'dry' paint and long, coarse brushstrokes with a lot of space between them, and that manner is not found in the works from Arles but is repeated in another self-portrait from the end of his time in Paris (fig. 129a).

These two works belong to a series of four self-portraits (the others are cat. 130 and fig. 130b) in which Van Gogh applied the colour experiments of his preceding still lifes (cats. 126-28) to the human face. In this small painting he continued that interplay of long and short lines of different hues and colours mainly in the face. The background and smock are in lines of a single colour, which is why it can be assumed that this is the first in the series of four paintings. The manner in the other three is far more varied.

4 This can be deduced from letter 578, in which he states that he started looking for paint and canvases as soon as he arrived in Arles.

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
De la Faille 1927, ill. p. 51; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 150, vol. 2, pl. CXLIII; Scherjon/De Gruyter 1937, p. 28, note 3; De la Faille 1939, p. 306, no. 423; Bromig-Kolleritz 1954, pp. 53, 54, 56, 108, 109; Hammacher 1960, p. 11; Erpel 1964, p. 61, no. 33; De la Faille 1970, pp. 228, 632; Hulsker 1977, pp. 354, 358, 359, 485, note 9; Hulsker 1980, pp. 354, 358, 359, 484, note 9; Toronto/Amsterdam 1981, p. 106; Amsterdam 1987, p. 341, no. 1.207; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 101; Kyoto/Tokyo 1992, pp. 72, 73, no. 8; Hamburg 1995, pp. 120, 121; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 42, 311; Hulsker 1996, pp. 354, 358, 359; Tokyo 1996, pp. 46, 47, 138, no. 1; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 120, 124, 125; Dorn 2005, pp. 15, 16, 21; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 53, 66; Rome 2010-11, pp. 166, 253, no. 62.

EXHIBITIONS
1905 Amsterdam II, no. 439 [Dfl. 600]; 1905 Hamburg, no. 20 [Dfl. 800]; 1905 Dresden, no. 46; 1905 Berlin II, no cat.; 1906 Vienna, no. 31 (for sale); 1909-10 Munich, no. 32, Frankfurt am Main, Dresden & Chemnitz, no cat. known [Dfl. 1,500]; 1914 Antwerp, no. 71; 1914 Berlin, no. 38; 1914 Cologne & Hamburg, no cat. known; 1926 Munich, no. 2085 (not for sale); 1927 Paris, no cat.; 1930 Amsterdam, no. 65; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 86; 1935 Brussels, no. 103?; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1946 Maastricht & Heerlen, no. 60?; 1946 Stockholm, Gothenburg & Malmö, no. 29; 1946 Copenhagen, no. 30; 1947 Groningen, no. 99; 1951 Lyon & Grenoble, no. 62; 1951 Saint-Rémy, no. 62; 1953 The Hague, no. 97; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 66; 1954 Zürich, no. 29; 1954-55 Bern, no. 36; 1955 Antwerp, no. 326; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 216; 1958 Deventer, no. 14; 1958 Mons, no. 19; 1960 London, no. 17; 1961 Humlebæk, no. 79? [possibly cat. 116]; 1962 Paris, no. 57; 1964-65 Delft & Antwerp, no. 55; 1972-73 Dordrecht, no. 4; 1979 Amsterdam, Tokyo, Sapporo, Hiroshima & Nagoya, no. 63; 1989 Verona, unnumbered; 1992 Kyoto & Tokyo, no. 8; 1994 Amsterdam, no cat.; 1995 Hamburg, unnumbered; 1996 Tokyo, no. 1; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 42; 2006-07 Amsterdam & New York, unnumbered; 2010-11 Rome, no. 62.

130
Self-portrait with grey felt hat

Paris, September-October 1887
Oil on cotton
44.5 x 37.2 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 16 V/1962
F 344 JH 1353

Like *Courtesan: after Eisen* (cat. 133) and two of his studies of sunflowers gone to seed (cat. 124, fig. 124c), this self-portrait is not on linen but on finely woven cotton. Van Gogh used an identical prepared cotton for all four works (Table 3.8, nos. 71-73). It was primed with a single ground of mineral barytes, and although it was thin it was sufficient to counter the absorbency of the cotton. The barytes was coarsely ground and gave the surface of the support, which is fairly smooth by nature, a slightly grainy texture. Cotton was less expensive than linen, and barytes was relatively cheap, so his choice of both would have been prompted by the economies he had been forced to make since July 1887 (see cats. 116-20).

Van Gogh made an underdrawing in thin red paint (probably organic), as can be seen with some difficulty by the nose, the ear and the contours of the face. He then built the scene up with thick paints in alternating small and larger strokes applied on top of and alongside each other to create a lively texture. Many of them are on top of an underlayer that had largely dried, which tells us that the portrait was made in the course of several sessions. It was severely damaged in 1978 when a visitor to the museum slashed it with a knife, leaving two long diagonal gashes (fig. 130a).[1]

The work belongs to a small group of self-portraits (the others being cat. 129, figs. 129a, 130b) in which Van Gogh pursued the colour experiments he had embarked on in his preceding still lifes (cats. 126-28, figs. 126b, 126c). He had evidently gained enough self-confidence to be consistent in his use of long and broad strokes in different shades and colours which, according to the Neo-Impressionist colour theory, would combine in the eye of the beholder. This haloing ('aureoler', as he called it) was pursued the furthest in this painting [669]. The strokes in the background undulate around the head, as they do around the fruit in the still lifes (see cats. 126, 128). Those in the neck and the clothing largely follow the shape of the body, but in the face they radiate out to the edges from the centre between the eyes, and that effect was continued in the beard and the hat. He quite clearly used a much finer brush for the portrait than for the background.

The colours are remarkably bright. In the face there are different hues of yellow, pink and white, alternating with bright red and the complementary green, the effect being particularly colourful on the shaded side. The complementary contrast between green and red is very pronounced in the eyes, which gives the artist's gaze a great intensity. However, discolouration has robbed the initial palette of some of its force. The background and jacket now consist mainly of blues, but originally they were purple, as can still be seen vaguely on the edges of the painting that were covered by the frame. Analysis of the blue of the background has shown that it contains cochineal on a tin substrate, an extremely light-sensitive red pigment which Van Gogh used a lot in Paris. The red continued to fade after the vandalism of 1978, as can be seen from a filling inserted at the time that overlaps a tiny part of the

1 Bits of paint that fell to the floor were analysed in the Central Laboratory (now the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands) in Amsterdam as part of the restoration process. This was when the barytes was identified in the ground layer. On this investigation and its implications for the restoration see pp. 34, 35.



130 Self-portrait with grey felt hat



130a Photograph of the painting after it had been vandalised in 1978.



130b *Self-portrait* (F 320 JH 1334), 1887. Paris, Musée d'Orsay.

original paint layer. The colour of the paint under this filling is more purple. Purple was chosen as a complementary contrast for the yellow in the face and for the less prominent brushstrokes of that colour in the hat and tie.

Van Gogh would have regarded this self-portrait as a far-reaching experiment with colour. The almost exaggerated 'haloing' colours and brushwork make him look almost like a native American in war paint, but we should realise that the purpose of this stylistic exaggeration was to discover just how far he could go. After this study he began applying colour theory more subtly, as shown by the larger self-portrait from the closing months of his time in Paris (cat. 137). He was nevertheless happy with his experiment, because he did not hesitate to display his 'fiery faces', as Emile Bernard so neatly put it, in his exhibition at the restaurant belonging to Etienne-Lucien Martin (see cat. 136).[2]

2 Bernard 1924, p. 241: 'visages enflammées'. Bernard actually owned one of the self-portraits from this group of four: F 319 JH 1333 (fig. 129a); on which see p. 21, note 14.

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
De la Faille 1928, vol. I, p. 97, vol. 2, pl. XCIII; De la Faille 1939, after p. 304, no. VII; Bromig-Kolleritz 1954, pp. 44, 48, 50, 51, 53, 68, 70, 71, 75, 106; Hammacher 1960, p. 9; Erpel 1964, pp. 54, 55, no. 10; De la Faille 1970, pp. 162, 165, 624; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 125, note 51, 198, 226; Hulsker 1977, pp. 264, 300, 302, 304, 305; Hulsker 1980, pp. 262, 300, 302, 304, 305; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 188, 189, 337, no. 1.185; Van der Wolk 1987, p. 280; Amsterdam 1988, pp. 107, 108, no. 46; Amsterdam 1990, pp. 83, 85, no. 27; Glasgow/Amsterdam 1990-91 I, pp. 139, 140, no. 30; Tokyo 1994, pp. 42, 43, 115, 116, no. 5; Hulsker 1996, pp. 262, 288, 300, 302, 304, 305; Zemel 1997, p. 147; Shackelford 2000, pp. 114, 117, ill. 73; Silverman 2000, pp. 37, 38; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 112, 120, 122, 124, 125; Dorn 2005, p. 21; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 47, 54, 60, 71, 74, note 64; London/Sydney 2005-06, pp. 152, 153, no. 34; Van Heugten 2008, p. 45; Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 43.

Exhibitions
1928 Berlin, no. 28; 1928 Frankfurt am Main, no. 17; 1928 Vienna, no. 16? [possibly cat. 98 or F 345 JH 1249]; 1928-29 Hanover, Munich & Leipzig, no cat., no. 13, no cat. known; 1929 Utrecht, no. 23? [not for sale]; 1930 Amersfoort, no cat. known?; 1930 London, no. 1; 1930 Amsterdam, no. 24; 1932 Cologne, no cat. known; 1932 Manchester, no. 45; 1937 Paris, no. 6; 1938-39 Batavia, no. 32; 1939 Surabaya, no. 4; 1939 Bandung, no cat.; 1939 San Francisco, no. 172; 1939-40 San Francisco, no.Y-122; 1940 Cleveland, no. 16; 1940 Cambridge & New Haven, no cat.; 1940 New York, no. 11; 1941 Chapel Hill, no cat.; 1941 Boston, no cat. known; 1941 Spokane, no. 4; 1942 Dayton, unnumbered; 1942 Baltimore & Worcester, no. 7; 1942 Providence, no cat. known; 1943 Albany, Pittsburgh & Toledo, no. 3.G; 1943 Northampton, Philadelphia & Montgomery, no cat. known, no. 3.G, no cat. known; 1943 Saint Louis, no. 3.G; 1943 Springfield, no cat. known; 1943 New York, no. 21; 1943-44 Indianapolis, Cincinnati & Ottawa, no. 3.G; 1944 Montreal, no. 119; 1944 Fort Wayne, no. 3.G; 1944 New York, no. 3.G; 1944 Richmond, no cat.; 1944 Charleston, no. 3.G; 1944 Atlanta, no cat. known; 1945 New Orleans, Louisville & Syracuse, no cat. known, no. 3.G, no cat.; 1945 Toronto & Quebec, no cat. known, no. unknown; 1945 New York, no cat.; 1945 Norwich, no. 3.G.; 1946-47 Liège, Brussels & Mons, no. 69; 1947 Paris, no. 70; 1947 Geneva, no. 71; 1947-48 London, Birmingham & Glasgow, no. 28; 1948 Bergen & Oslo, no. 20; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 96; 1949 Middelburg, no. 14; 1951 Lyon & Grenoble, no. 21; 1951 Arles, no. 21; 1952 Enschede, no. 23; 1952 Eindhoven, no. 32; 1953 The Hague, no. 83; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 62; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 62; 1954 Zürich, no. 26; 1954-55 Willemstad, no. 9; 1955 Palm Beach, Miami & New Orleans, no. 9; 1955 Antwerp, no. 206; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 114; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 31; 1957 Marseille, no. 34; 1958 Mons, no. 11a; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 28; 1959 Aix-en-Provence, no. 3; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 25; 1960-61 Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg & Toronto, no. 31; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 30; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 30; 1963 Humlebæk, no. 21; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 21; 1965 Charleroi & Ghent, no. 13; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 26; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 35; 1967 Glasgow, no. 42; 1968-69 London, no. 96; 1969-70 Los Angeles, Saint Louis & Philadelphia, no. 23; 1970-71 Baltimore, San Francisco & New York, no. 23; 1971-72 Paris, no. 43; 1972 London, no. 21; 1976-77 Tokyo, Kyoto & Nagoya, no. 39; 1988 Amsterdam, no. 46; 1990 Amsterdam, no. 27; 1990-91 Glasgow & Amsterdam, nos. 30 and 43 respectively; 1994 Amsterdam, no cat.; 1994 Tokyo, no. 5; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 41; 2000-01 Detroit, Boston & Philadelphia, unnumbered; 2001 Saint Louis & Frankfurt am Main, unnumbered; 2003 Amsterdam II, unnumbered; 2005-06 London & Sydney, no. 34; 2010-11 Tokyo, Fukuoka & Nagoya, no. 79.

Paris, October-November 1887
Oil on canvas
55.6 x 46.8 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 115 V/1962
F 371 JH 1296

131
Flowering plum orchard: after Hiroshige

Van Gogh made three paintings after Japanese prints during his creative competition with Emile Bernard in the autumn of 1887 (cats. 131-33).[1] They are almost unparalleled in 19th-century western art. The only comparable work is a picture by an unknown artist after a woodcut by Hiroshige (fig. 131a) executed in a coarse form of Pointillism.[2] Since it came from Bernard's estate, the artist would have moved in the same artistic circles as Van Gogh, which could mean that there were more examples of painted copies after Japanese prints than one would suspect from his three pictures alone.[3]

Painting copies after prints was nothing new at the time, but Van Gogh had no experience with it. He had made drawings after prints in the early part of his career, but this was something different. His paintings after Japanese prints – two landscapes (cats. 131, 132) and one figure piece (cat. 133) – were very experimental and can be regarded as forerunners of what he raised to the level of a separate genre during his stay in the asylum in Saint-Rémy: making free versions in colour of prints after works by artists whom he admired.

The small size of the two landscapes, *Flowering plum orchard* and *Bridge in the rain* (cats. 131, 132), suggests that they preceded the far larger figure piece, *Courtesan* (cat. 133). The first is on a standard *figure* 10, and the second on a horizontal *paysage* 20. Both, like the painting by the unknown artist (fig. 131a), are copies after woodcuts by Utagawa Hiroshige, and those models have survived (figs. 131b, 132b).

Hiroshige, Kitagawa Utamaro and Katsushika Hokusai were the leading Japanese graphic artists, but Hiroshige was the only one represented in Van Gogh's print collection.[4] After Hokusai he was regarded as 'the most vivid and prolific 19th-century painter of customs' and also 'the greatest landscapist'.[5] The two landscape prints Van Gogh chose were from Hiroshige's late series, *One hundred famous views of Edo* (1856-59), which was already being called 'celebrated'.[6] The full suite consisted of 119 prints, of which Vincent and Theo owned 13.[7] It was far from complete, in other words, and it is not clear whether Van Gogh realised that the two landscapes belonged together.

The *Flowering plum orchard* was the smaller of the two scenes after Hiroshige's prints, so it would have been the first that Van Gogh painted. The print, *The Plum tree teahouse at Kameido* (fig. 131b), was interesting for various reasons. The areas of colour are quite large, unlike the average Japanese woodcut. The combination of the two main colours, green and expressive red, is also unusual, and Van Gogh would undoubtedly have found this use of complementary colours attractive. Another striking feature is the audacious truncation of the foreground tree, but since Van Gogh had not yet started using such extreme devices in his own compositions it seems doubtful that this contributed to his decision to imitate this print.[8] The most important reason was undoubtedly the composition conceived so rigidly

1 For this competition see pp. 80-85.
2 That work measures 81.3 x 30.5 cm. Ensor also made a painted study after a Japanese print, but it is quite small and also rather sketchy, which makes it difficult to assess its purpose. See Tricot 1992, vol. 1, p. 49, cat. 28.
3 For the provenance see Cleveland etc. 1975-76, p. 139, no. 191.
4 There were fewer impressions in circulation of the prints by Hokusai and Utamaro than of those by Hiroshige and Eisen (kind communication from Matthi Forrer, Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden). There is a good description of Van Gogh's collection in Shimizu 1992, pp. 240, 241. The family collection contains 44 sheets by Hiroshige; see Amsterdam 2006, nos. 25-31, 33, 35, 36, 41, 42, 44, 52, 56, 58, 60, 66, 67, 70, 71, 73, 75, 81, 84-96, 97-102b (with Hiroshige II [no. 96]). The artist who is best represented, though, is Utagawa Kunisada (Toyokuni III), 159 of whose woodcuts are preserved in the family collection.
5 Gonse 1886, p. 106: '[...] le peintre de moeurs le plus vivant et le plus fécond du XIXe siècle [...] le plus grand paysagiste'. It is difficult to say how much expert knowledge Van Gogh had about Japanese printmaking, nor whether he always knew who the prints were by. In his correspondence he once mentions 'Monorou', which is a garbling of Hishikawa Moronobou (letter 768), but apart from that he only speaks of Hokusai (letters 640, 642, 653, 676, 686).
6 Gonse 1886, p. 106: 'célèbre'. Van Gogh knew this book; see Van Tilborgh 2006, pp. 19, 20.
7 Amsterdam 2006, pp. 95-98, nos. 84-96; one work in the series is actually by Hiroshige II (no. 96).
8 He only started doing so in Arles, when Gauguin encouraged him to stylise his works far more. It is assumed that the latter took Hiroshige's print as the model for his *Vision of the sermon (Jacob wrestling with the angel)* (Edinburgh, National Gallery of Scotland), whereupon Vincent followed him in his *Sower* (F 450 JH 1627; see, for example, Edinburgh 2005, p. 44. However, Gauguin could also have borrowed his composition from Van Gogh's copy after Hiroshige's print (cat. 131), which was probably in the exhibition organised by Van Gogh in the Du Chalet restaurant, which Gauguin visited.



131 Flowering plum orchard: after Hiroshige



131a Anonymous artist, *The whirlpool Naruto in Awa province; after Hiroshige*. Salt Lake City, Utah Museum of Fine Arts.

in sharply defined blocks and the use of bright but simple colours. The idea of imitating a print fairly literally in paint was in line with Bernard's new goal of a 'simplification of colour using full tones harmonised in accordance with a system of almost flat tints'.[9]

Hiroshige's print shows an orchard against the red glow of the setting sun.[10] It was near Kameido and was famous for its very ancient plum tree, which had unusually low branches. Its roots had led to the growth of new trees with equally low branches, as a result of which the structure was given the poetic name of 'the sleeping dragon plum tree'. Visitors were not allowed into the orchard, and there were fences to keep them at a safe distance, as can be seen in the woodcut. On the left is a tablet with the name of the tree.[11] It is not known whether Van Gogh was aware of these details, although it does seem that he sought information from specialists when buying Japanese prints.[12]

He made a tracing of the print in order to imitate Hiroshige's composition as faithfully as possible (fig. 131c). He drew a grid on the transparent paper, and probably did not use the metric system but the old French system of *pieds* (feet, approximately 32.5 cm) and *pouces* (inches, approximately 2.7 cm).[13] This is suggested by the fact that the distance between the lines is roughly 1.3 centimetres, or half a *pouce*. He numbered the lines from 17 to 1 at the top and bottom and from 1 to 27 at the sides.[14] He then traced the outlines of the principal parts of the scene, indicating the horizon and the transition between the white and red areas of the sky with diagonal hatching.

Van Gogh then drew the tracing paper grid in pencil on the canvas, as can be seen in the foreground tree trunk. He made the interval between the lines one-and-a-half times as large, that is to say three-quarters of a *pouce* (approximately 1.9 cm). He numbered the squares of the grid at the edges of the canvas in a dark, blackish paint, and at the bottom, where he probably used graphite (p. 126, fig. 51). He then drew the contours of the main elements with graphite, which he reinforced with

9 Bernard 1952 II, p. 313: '[...] de simplifier la couleur par des tons entiera et accordés selon un système de teintes presques plates'.
10 This and the following information is from Smith/Poster 1986, no. 30, and Forrer 1997, no. 93.
11 Forrer 1997, no. 93.
12 They included Nephtalie Lévy, Samuel Bing's branch manager, whom Van Gogh praised as 'a SERIOUS collector of Japanese art' [686], and probably the dealer Alphonse Portier, a friend of Theo's, who sold Japanese prints to Degas. See Ives 1997, p. 255.
13 On the use of the pre-metric system see p. 127, note 126. There were 12 *pouces* to a *pied*, and at approximately 2.7 cm 1 *pouce* was more than 1.5 mm longer than an English inch (2.54 cm). Those old measures were also the basis for the standard sizes of canvas in France; see Callen 2000, pp. 18, 19.
14 See Drawings 3, pp. 320-24. When Van Gogh was drawing the grid he tore through the tracing paper with his pencil at the top right corner, scoring a line on the underlying print (ibid, p. 324).





131b Utagawa Hiroshige, *The Plum tree teahouse at Kameido*, 1857. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

131c Tracing of Hiroshige, *The Plum tree teahouse at Kameido* (F – JH –), 1887. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

131d Utagawa Hiroshige, *The Plum tree teahouse at Kameido*, 1857. Honolulu, Honolulu Academy of Art, Gift of James A. Michener, 1991.

thin blackish lines, probably in the same paint as the numerals. That paint was also used for the diagonal hatching in the sky matching that in the tracing. Having completed this preliminary work he began painting, first filling in the main blocks of colour before working those areas up with more impasted paint and adding details like the blossoms and slender branches in the background. He also reinforced many contours with dark paint, such as those of the trees further off in the distance.



Van Gogh chose a very finely woven canvas of the type that he was later to use for *Bridge in the rain* (Table 3.2, nos. 3, 2). Neither of them was sized[15] before being given a very thin ground of calcium carbonate, probably bound in glue.[16] The composition is not exactly the same in each case, for they differ in colour, because the ground of *Flowering plum orchard* consists of calcium carbonate alone, whereas it was mixed with bone black for *Bridge in the rain* (p. 111, figs. 27, 28). The present yellowish, beige colour of the ground is visible along the edges of the scene and along the contours in the orchard, but originally it may have been paler. The nubs of the canvas weave were scarcely covered by the ground, increasing its absorbent character.[17] Like his fellow painters, he undoubtedly believed that a porous substrate helped paints retain their colour by absorbing the superfluous oil.[18] He chose buttery paints rich in pigment, which he had preferred since the spring of 1887.

Although Van Gogh followed the composition of Hiroshige's *Plum tree teahouse at Kameido* meticulously, he departed from it a little with his colours. The composition of the print consists of five areas that are largely in a single colour: black and dark grey for the large tree trunk, blue for the sky at the top, red and white for the passages beneath that, and green for the grass (with blue and yellow for a few details). Van Gogh expanded that colour scheme, but avoided black and grey. The tree trunks in the background are filled with a pale greyish purple and have bright blue and dark green outlines. He modelled the foreground tree with transparent organic red and dark blue, on top of which he placed full strokes of organic red. For this he used cochineal on a tin substrate, which has faded and lost its force,

15 On this see p. 108, note 72.
16 See p. 111, note 89.
17 On this see p. 111, note 90. He chose a slightly less absorbent ground for his third *Japonaiserie, Courtesan: after Eisen* (cat. 133).
18 See p. 154, note 44, for Van Gogh's mentions of absorbent canvas.



131e Utagawa Kunisada, *Kataoka Gadō II as Ume no Yosibibei*, 1859. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

while the thinly painted passages have become more transparent, revealing the grid. The thicker strokes have a network of cracks through which a brighter red can be seen deeper below the picture surface.

Van Gogh did not use white for the lowest section of the sky but pale yellow, probably in order to introduce a light complementary contrast with the horizontal branch to the right of centre, which has a purplish look due to the addition of blue on the red. Nor did he repeat the dark blue section of Hiroshige's sky. He may have found it too crude in relation to the red beside it, but his decision could equally well have been prompted by another impression of the same print in which that element is also missing (fig. 131d). He did reproduce the red and the complementary green. The colours in the painting are far intenser than the rather pallid ones in the print. Vivid emerald green was used pure in the grass, for example.[19] He may well have based these colours on a better and more expensive impression of the print seen at an art dealer's (fig. 131d).[20]

He surrounded the scene with a bright orange border consisting of red lead applied pure from the tube, like the green of the grass (p. 139, fig. 70). This made the painting a free translation of the original in the three primary and secondary colours of red, blue, yellow, and purple, orange, green. He imitated the print by applying them in large, solid blocks, filling in the red, green and orange ones, in particular, fairly evenly. He did not imitate the fillings in the print. Hiroshige's grass gradually changes into a pale green towards the background, where it eventually blends into the white of the sky and the blossoming trees (which merges above with the red of the sky). Van Gogh, though, made those transitions very abrupt, as can be seen in the grass, which suddenly changes colour at the height of the fence. Nor did he plan to change it gradually, because he had already indicated the demarcations with dotted outlines and hatchings in the tracing.

He departed from his model in other respects as well. He translated the graphic into purely painterly effects, concentrating on lively brushwork and pleasant differences in the consistency of the paint, and in this he succeeded superbly. There are thick strokes here and there in the washes in the foreground tree trunk, and there is plenty of variety in the meadow as well. The orange and pink in the sky are fairly thinly although wildly painted, but in the tops of the trees there are very thick strokes with upright clumps of paint. The blossom on the foreground tree is also rather impasted (p. 154, fig. 14). All these examples make it clear that while following his model he nevertheless wanted to do justice to the three-dimensionality of his own medium – oil paint.

However, he did not use the variation in brushwork and paint consistency to create a sense of depth. As in his Asnières landscapes, one sees a tension between an illusionistic handling of paint and brushstrokes which actually emphasise the flatness of the picture surface. The trees full of blossom at the back of the orchard, which barely have anything in common with the slender ones in the print, are by far the most painterly part of the composition, and advance strongly in an optical sense. The broad band with wild, angular strokes at the transition from the trees to the sky also destroys the sense of depth.

The borders around the scene were in a sense accidental. Van Gogh painted his copy of Hiroshige's print on a standard size of canvas, which left him with broad

19 The emerald green merely contains a little gypsum, but that was added by the manufacturer, on which see cat. 106.
20 It is worth noting that an imperfection in the printing process left the white of the paper visible here and there along the contours in Van Gogh's impression of Hiroshige's print. Small sections of the white ground are also visible in the painting, with the result that blocks of colour do not quite touch, but it is difficult to say whether this was done deliberately.



131f Ikkōsai Yoshimori, *The courtesan Nishikigi*, c. 1865. Private collection.

unpainted strips on the left and right and a narrow one at the bottom. The post with the signboard served to close the print off on the left, and this must have given him the idea of framing the scene with an equally thick strip on the right. In a late stage of the painting process, when these bright orange bands were nearly dry, he added Japanese characters to them in contrasting green. He may have got this idea from prints by Utagawa Kunisada in his own collection, in which texts were written around portrait busts (fig. 131e).[21] In any event, the characters changed the very nature of the painting. From an exercise in the use of flat and bright colours it now became far more of a *Japonaiserie*, a curiosity in the Japanese manner, which is why it was described as a 'fantasie japonaise' in the 1890 inventory of Theo's collection, whereupon Jo van Gogh-Bonger introduced the title 'Japonaiserie' in 1905, which was then widely adopted.[22]

Although the Japanese characters in the borders of Van Gogh's *Flowering plum orchard* and *Bridge in the rain*, (cats. 131, 132), are unique in 19th-century western painting, they were not studied for a long time. Mark Roskill was the first to decipher them in 1970, with the aid of native speakers.[23] Not everything would have been comprehensible to Japanese people, but on the basis of the elements that did have a meaning for them he concluded that Van Gogh had 'used the inscriptions found on a series of *Eight views of Yoshiwara* by another artist than Hiroshige'.[24] That hitherto unidentified print from a series about the brothel district of Edo,

21 This was suggested in Van Bremen-Ito/Van Rappard-Boon 1992, p. 18. Van Gogh depicted a print by Kunisada (Toyokuni III), the original of which has such a text, in the background of his portrait of Julien Tanguy (F 364 JH 1352 [fig. 128e]; see Amsterdam 2006, no. 272).
22 The same term was applied to the other two works (cats. 132, 133); see Bonger 1890, nos. 52-54, and Amsterdam 1905, nos. 71, 93, 94. Van Gogh himself called Japanese prints *Japonaiseries*.
23 Roskill 1970 I, pp. 80-82, and Roskill 1970 II, pp. 18-20.
24 Roskill 1970 I, p. 80.
25 Ibid.



131g Ikkōsai Yoshimori, *The courtesan Nishikigi*, c. 1865. Private collection.

1-3 大黒屋 Dai koku ya
[Name of the brothel]
4,5 錦木 Nishiki gi
[Name of the courtesan, 'Brocade tree']
6-11 江戸町一丁目 E do machi 1 cho me
[Edo machi, 1 chome (address of the brothel)]
12-14 新吉原 Shin yoshi wara
[New Yoshiwara (name of the brothel district)]
15 筆
[hitsu (drawn)]

present-day Tokyo, bore no relation to the Hiroshige scene, and in his view this confirmed that Van Gogh had chosen the characters 'purely for their decorative and associative value'.[25]

However, Roskill's interpretation was not exhaustive, for in 1992 it was discovered that Van Gogh had decorated the borders with characters from not one but two woodcuts, as explained by Keiko van Bremen-Ito and Charlotte van Rappard-Boon.[26] Those in *Flowering plum orchard* were taken from *The courtesan Nishikigi* by Ikkōsai Yoshimori (1830-85; fig. 131f), but those in *Bridge in the rain* (cat. 132) are from two woodcuts: Yoshimori's print again and the unknown woodcut from the scene in the *Eight views of Yoshiwara* series that Roskill was referring to.

Van Gogh's choice of Yoshimori's *The courtesan Nishikigi* was probably due entirely to the exceptional size of its characters, which made it easy to imitate them. He even used them in cartouches within the central scene. Since the decoration of the borders and the content of the text blocks were late additions (the painting was already almost dry), he would no longer have considered it necessary to consult Hiroshige's woodcut but would have been content with what Ikkōsai's print had to offer.

The sequence of characters in the decoration is related to the position of the lines in Ikkōsai's print (compare figs. 131g, 131h). Van Gogh began in the left-hand border of the painting by copying the line on the left in the print (1-5), which he continued reading from left to right, the opposite of what the Japanese do, to fill the borders.[27] However, he had used up all the large characters by the time he got halfway down the right side (1-14), so he filled the remainder of it with a smaller character from the model (15) and five easily imitated ones from the lines he had already copied (1, 10, 11, 3 and 5).[28] The latter also served as his model from which to fill the three cartouches.[29]

26 After an analysis of the texts by Van Bremen-Ito and Van Rappard-Boon, from which it emerged that Roskill 1970 II, pp. 18-20, had not read them entirely correctly, the print was discovered by a working group headed by Ikegami Tadaharu (Kobe University); see Van Bremen-Ito/Van Rappard-Boon 1992, pp. 15-18. Taguchi (or Miki) Sakuzó, a pupil of Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797-1861), took the given name of Ikkōsai Yoshimori. Our use of their interpretations, which we have kept to here and in the following entry, was made possible by the kind assistance of Tomoko Murayama.

27 So without Van Gogh being aware of it the left border contains the name of the brothel, the name of the courtesan Nishikigi (4-5) and the address of the brothel (6-11). In the right border is the name of the brothel district, Shin-yoshi-wara, the new district of Yoshiwara (12-14).

28 He thought there were only four, regarding 10 and 11 as a single character, as can be seen from his *Bridge in the rain*, in which they are shown vertically in the lower border. The same applies to 8 and 9, and to the characters '八' and '景' in Yoshi-wara-hakkei.

29 Not all the characters in the text blocks are legible. They would have been copied from Ikkōsai's print, but it is impossible to identify the models.



131h Cat. 131. The numbers correspond to those in 131g.

Left: 大黒屋錦木江戸町一丁目
Right: 新吉原筆大丁目屋木
Top, square cartouche: 大木江戸?
Top, long cartouche: 町丁目??
Bottom, long cartouche: ??錦

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Bonger 1890, no. 53 [Fantaisie japonaise]; De la Faille 1927, ill. p. 79; De la Faille 1928, vol. I, p. 104, vol. 2, pl. CII; De la Faille 1939, after p. 176, no. 11; Baard 1946, p. 17; Tralbaut 1954, pp. 22, 30, 32, 33; Amsterdam 1958, nos. 209-11; Orton 1969, p. 19; De la Faille 1970, pp. 172, 173, 626; Roskill 1970 I, pp. 80, 81; Roskill 1970 II, pp. 19, 20; Orton 1971, p. 10; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 47, 127, note 69, 235; Hulsker 1977, pp. 286, 288, 289, 372; Amsterdam 1978, p. 17; Hulsker 1980, pp. 286, 289, 374; Toronto/Amsterdam 1981, pp. 110-13, no. 9; Tokyo/Nagoya 1985-86, pp. 178, 180, 181, no. 61; Osaka 1986, p. 129, no. 42; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 204, 205, 336, no. 1.176; Varnedoe 1990, pp. 56, 76, 77; Van Bremen-Ito/Van Rappard-Boon 1992; Hulsker 1996, pp. 286, 288, 289, 372; Saint Louis/Frankfurt 2001, p. 120; Amsterdam 2003, p. 111; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 120, 124; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 54, 60, 63; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 68, 285, 307.

Exhibitions
1905 Amsterdam I, no. 71 [Dfl. 300]; 1926 Munich, no. 2075 (not for sale); 1927 Paris, no cat.; 1928 Berlin, no. 34; 1928 Frankfurt am Main, no. 23; 1928 Vienna, no. 21; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 74; 1932 Manchester, no. 30; 1937 Paris, no. 151; 1937 Oslo, no. 11; 1938 Copenhagen, no. 21; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1946-47 Liège, Brussels & Mons, no. 68; 1947 Paris, no. 69; 1947 Geneva, no. 70; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 102; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 81; 1955 Antwerp, no. 210; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 117; 1958 Rotterdam, ex catalogue; 1958-59 Paris, no. 394; 1960 Bordeaux, no. 138; 1961 Humlebæk, no. 77; 1962 Leiden, unnumbered; 1965 Berlin, no. 33; 1968 Tokyo, unnumbered; 1969-70 Los Angeles, Saint Louis & Philadelphia, no. 19; 1970-71 Baltimore, San Francisco & New York, no. 19; 1971-72 Paris, no. 49; 1972 Munich, no. 651; 1979-80 Tokyo, Osaka, Fukuoka & Tokyo, no. 51; 1981 Toronto & Amsterdam, no. 9; 1985-86 Tokyo & Nagoya, no. 61; 1986 Osaka, no. 42; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2001-02 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2001-02 Chicago & Amsterdam, no. 22 [only Amsterdam].

132
Bridge in the rain: after Hiroshige

Paris, October-November 1887
Oil on canvas
73.3 x 53.8 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 114 V/1962
F 372 JH 1297

This picture was painted not long after *Flowering plum orchard* (cat. 131), and it too is modelled on a print by Hiroshige: *Afternoon shower on the Great Bridge near Atake* from the series *One hundred famous views of Edo* (1856-59) (fig. 132a). It shows a sudden downpour during the monsoon at the end of the day, with the figures on the bridge vainly trying to protect themselves with an umbrella, reed hat or straw raincoat. The Great Bridge was built in 1693 at Ōhashi near Tokyo. In the left background are the houseboats of Atake, and it is clear from Van Gogh's painting that he did not recognise them as structures.[1] Unlike the impression of Hiroshige's print in his collection, the bridge in the painting is not brown but an intense yellow, so he may have known other impressions and wanted to reproduce one of them. Some of them do show the bridge in that colour, and there are sheets in which the uppermost dark edge of the sky is as ragged as it is in Van Gogh's painting (fig. 132b).[2]

Although the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, a great connoisseur and even greater collector of Japanese prints, called Van Gogh's painting after the Hiroshige woodcut 'just an oil painting of this print' (adding: 'I don't think he did a good job of it either. The print was so far superior that it was too bad to look at what he did'), it is clear that the painting is more than just a repetition of the print in another medium.[3] Like his *Flowering plum orchard* it was intended as a *Japonaiserie*, with the emphasis on its curiosity value. Van Gogh now decided to put a frame around the entire scene and not just on the sides, and to make it as large as those side panels, and once again he decorated it with Japanese characters, only this time they are even more stylised than in the previous painting. However, he now abandoned the idea of including the cartouches in the central scene but moved them to the border, with the result that the centrepiece looks like a window with a view of the outside world. As with *Flowering plum orchard*, Van Gogh filled in the borders last, using bright paints squeezed directly from the tube: a vivid red lake composed of cochineal and Kopp's purpurin, pure emerald green and bright orange lead.

Van Gogh may have chosen Hiroshige's landscape because of the rain motif that was so popular in Japanese prints. He had tried to depict it himself in his Hague period, but only in drawings.[4] The draughtsman-like way he now rendered rain with parallel lines is fairly unique in painting. Degas had used it successfully in *Jockeys in the rain* (fig. 132c), but that was a pastel. Van Gogh painted rain several times after this, twice reverting to the solution in this copy after Hiroshige's print, but now applying it in a painterly way, with the result that it looks anything but Japanese (fig. 132d).[5]

Van Gogh used a very finely woven canvas, as he had done for *Flowering plum orchard*, but this time it was given a ground of chalk and bone black (Table 3.2, no. 2) (p. 111, figs. 27, 28). Canvases with pure chalk and glue grounds could be

1 Smith/Poster 1986, no. 58, and Forrer 1997, nos. 94, 95.
2 Kind communication from Matthi Forrer (Leiden, Museum Volkenkunde). The water also has a greener tint in those sheets.
3 Quoted in Meech 2001, p. 233.
4 Letter 258: 'How beautiful it is outdoors when everything is wet with rain – before – during – after the rain. I really ought not to miss a single shower'. There are several drawings and a watercolour from the same period in which walkers armed with umbrellas are shown out in the rain (F 990 JH 172 and F 1048 JH 102; and see also letter 272). Van Gogh adopted a graphic approach in the second work, a drawing, but an atmospheric one in the first, a watercolour. There the rain is only suggested by the umbrellas and the gleaming wet ground. See also his drawings of a Paris cemetery (F 1399 JH 1031 and F 1399a JH 1032), in which the rain is also depicted with lines. The subject is discussed briefly in Murayama/Van Tilborgh 1999, pp. 46-51.
5 The other work is F 650 JH 1839. He probably wanted to depict rain in F 515 JH 1683 and F 760 JH 2019, but there it is barely visible.



132 Bridge in the rain: after Hiroshige



132a Utagawa Hiroshige, *Afternoon shower on the Great Bridge near Atake*, 1857. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



132b Utagawa Hiroshige, *Afternoon shower on the Great Bridge near Atake*, 1857. Honolulu, Honolulu Academy of Arts, Gift of James A. Michener, 1991.

bought by the metre,[6] but the grey variant he used here could not, so he either applied the ground himself or ordered it specially from a colourman. The mixture of chalk and bone black produces a light grey colour in glue, but it turns a dark blackish grey when it absorbs oil.[7] In order to prevent this happening every time he applied a brushstroke he oiled out the ground before starting work. The lower boundary can be seen clearly at the bottom of the canvas (fig. 132e).[8]

Although no tracing of the print has survived, and no trace of a grid drawn on the ground could be detected with microscopy or infrared reflectography, Van Gogh almost certainly followed the same procedure as he had with *Flowering plum orchard* (cat. 131). This can be deduced from the fact that he followed Hiroshige's composition almost literally and once again enlarged 1.75 times. Since the lines are not visible in the infrared he must have drawn them with something other than carbon black.[9] He then applied a meticulously painted underdrawing, only glimpses of which can be seen through the fairly opaque picture surface by the bridge and the figures. The lines are quite thick, and are considerably darker than the ground. He also indicated the narrow red border around the scene, as well as the broader red strips on either side.

The colours of Hiroshige's woodcut are muted compared to those in his *Plum tree teahouse at Kameido* (figs. 131b, 131d). They actually consisted mainly of greys, and it seems that that was why Van Gogh now departed from his first copy (cat. 131) by choosing a canvas with a ground of the same colour. In the underdrawing he indicated not only the contours but also applied dark washes for various elements. That additional stage in the painting process was perhaps due to his decision not to repli-

6 Callen 2000, p. 56.
7 This was discovered during reconstructions within the framework of the HART project (part of the NWO De Mayerne project), on which see Carlyle 2005, p. 114.
8 It is known for certain that this saturated tone of the ground is due chiefly to the original layer of oil and not to a later varnish applied by a conservator. The edge of the varnish follows a straight line along the front edge of the current stretcher. The borderline between the saturated and unsaturated ground, on the other hand, is situated over the tacking margin and exactly matches the cusping of the canvas, which means that the layer of oil must have been applied before the canvas was stretched. If it had been put on afterwards the borderline would not have followed the succession of arches created by the attachment points.
9 The fact that not a trace of the grid lines can now be seen with the naked eye may be due to the change in the colour of the ground, which was still light grey when the lines were drawn but became dark grey after the canvas was oiled out – an effect that was later enhanced by saturation with wax-resin from a lining. Another possibility is that white chalk was used to draw on the grey ground, a material that is not detected by infrared and becomes transparent when saturated by binding media and varnish.



132c Edgar Degas, *Jockeys in the rain*, 1881. Glasgow, The Burrell Collection.



132d *Rain – Auvers* (F 811 JH 2096), 1890. Cardiff, Amgueddfa Cymru (National Museum Wales).

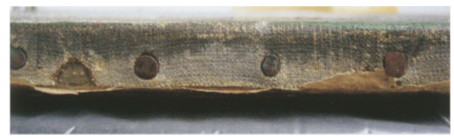
cate the greys of the original but to use brighter colours: blue in the sky and the riverbank, green in the water and yellow in the bridge. The scene has a marked perspective, and the tonal washes were intended to get it right when using a more colourful palette. Van Gogh had recourse to the traditional *ébauche*, in which a monochrome preparatory layer was first applied in order to establish depth and modelling to enable the colouring to follow rapidly and easily. This was a method that Van Gogh had earlier fallen back on for equally 'experimental' works (cats. 84, 96).

The grey underlayers have an important function in the overall effect. They have been left visible in some places – by the figures on the left sheltering under the grey umbrella (the ground is visible here) and by those on the right under the yellow umbrella (this is the grey wash). They can also be seen consistently along the contours. The blocks of colour often do not quite meet up at various points, creating a subtle imitation of the sharp outlines in the print. However, because Van Gogh used thick, buttery paint, his 'reserved' outlines are rather uneven and ragged.

There is also far less pure, intense colour than in *Flowering plum orchard* (cat. 131). Most of the colours are broken with white in order to achieve a softer, sometimes almost pastel effect. In addition, Van Gogh hardly made any attempt to match the even blocks of colour in the print. He used small, pronounced brushstrokes and touches of paint almost everywhere that give the surface a lively look. The water, for example, consists of dynamic, horizontal dabs of paint, while the sky is filled with taut diagonal strokes. He also added light and shadows to the supports and railing of the bridge, imparting a great sense of modelling and depth.

The rain consists of a series of almost vertical strokes. He first used a sharp object to score lines from top to bottom in the paint while it was still half wet, both freehand and with a ruler, exposing the ground. He then went over the scored lines (not always precisely) with thinned blue paint, so unlike Hiroshige's print the rain merges far more with the backdrop of the river, as it would have done in reality.

Van Gogh once again included Japanese characters, using the same source as he had for *Flowering plum orchard* (cat. 131): Ikkōsai's print of *The courtesan Nishikigi* (fig. 131e). Here, though, he had more room to fill, which forced him to use text from another woodcut as well. That print has not yet been identified, but it is known from the characters he used that it was from a series called *Eight views of Yoshiwara*.[10] Such series devoted to Tokyo's brothel district usually portrayed the courtesans to be found there, and since the name of the series in the painting is accompanied by the character '長 [naga]', the print may have been a portrait of a well-known courtesan called Nagao.[11]



132e Detail of cat. 132 showing the chalk ground stained by oil.

10 For this print see cat. 131, note 26.
11 This is suggested in Van Bremen-Ito/Van Rappard-Boon 1992, p. 8.



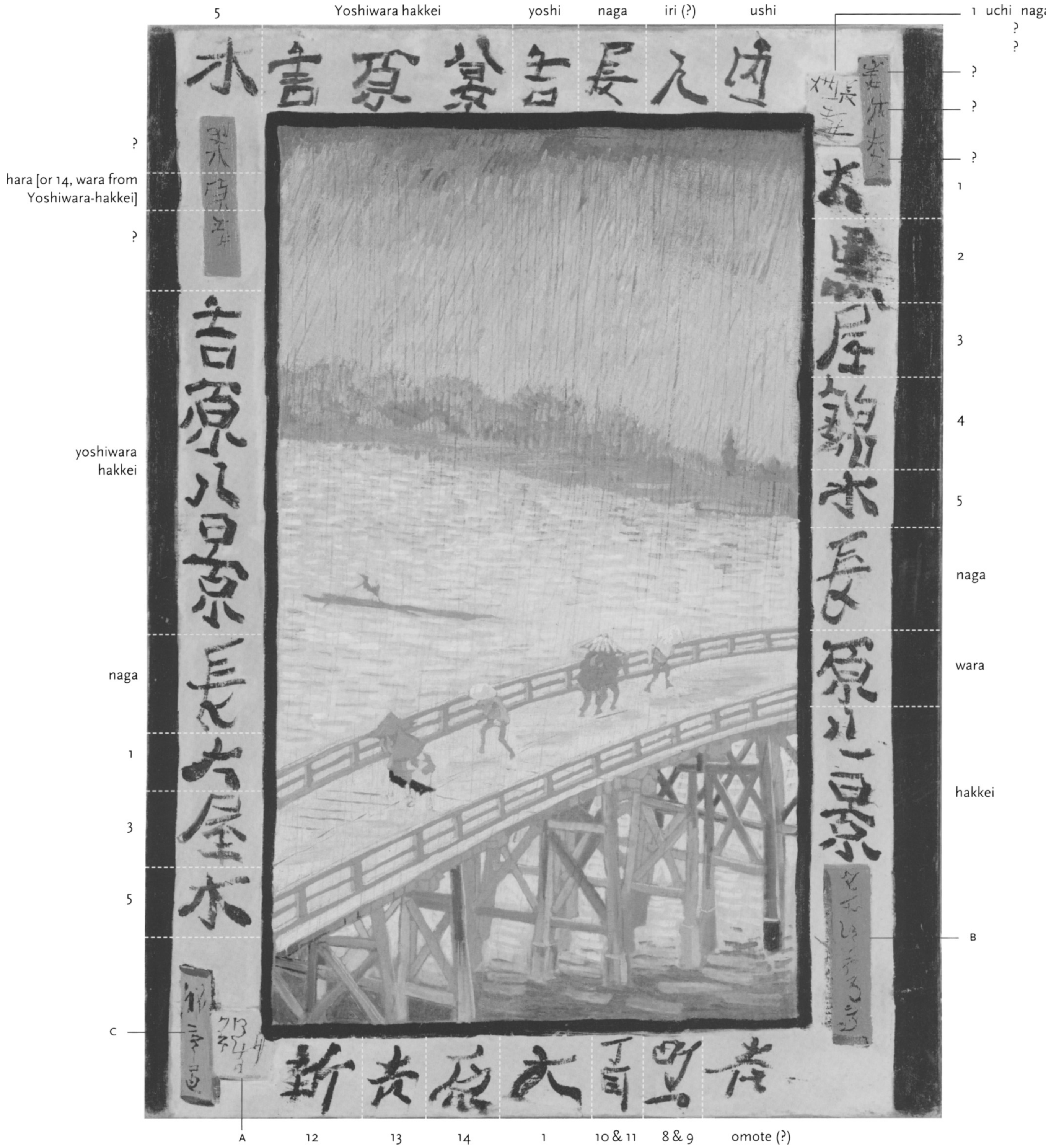
132f Ikkōsai Yoshimori, *The courtesan Nishikigi*, c. 1865. Private collection.

1-3 大黒屋 Dai koku ya
[Name of the brothel]
4,5 錦木 Nishiki gi
[Name of the courtesan, 'Brocade tree']
6-11 江戸町一丁目 E do machi 1 cho me
[Edo machi, 1 chome (address of the brothel)]
12-14 新吉原 Shin yoshi wara
[New Yoshiwara, (name of the brothel district)]
15 筆
[hitsu (drawn)]

Figs. 132f-h illustrate the way in which Van Gogh used the characters of his sources. The lack of the second model makes the decoration more difficult to interpret than that in the other Hiroshige copy, but one can detect some system in it.[12] Almost the same characters from the two prints appear in both side borders, but in a different order so as to avoid symmetry (compare figs. 132f and 132g). Van Gogh began at top left with the text from the unknown print ('吉原八景 [Eight views of Yoshiwara]' and '長 [naga]'), and ended with a selection of three characters from the left-hand line in the print by Ikkōsai (1, 3 and 5). He did the opposite in the right-hand border, beginning at the top by copying the entire left-hand line from Ikkōsai's print (1-5). He wanted to fill the remaining space with '吉原八景 [Eight views of Yoshiwara]' and '長 [naga]', but in order to avoid symmetry with the top part of the left-hand border, which has the same text, he reversed the order of the characters. Furthermore, there was not enough room for the full line because of the cartouche at the bottom of the border, so he omitted the character '吉 [Yoshi]'.[13] This dialogue in characters was not continued in the top and bottom borders. The bottom is filled mainly with characters from Ikkōsai's print (compare fig. 132f, 1 and 3), while the top is decorated with a line and loose characters from the unknown woodcut, with the addition of just one – '木' – from the portrait of Nishikigi (5).

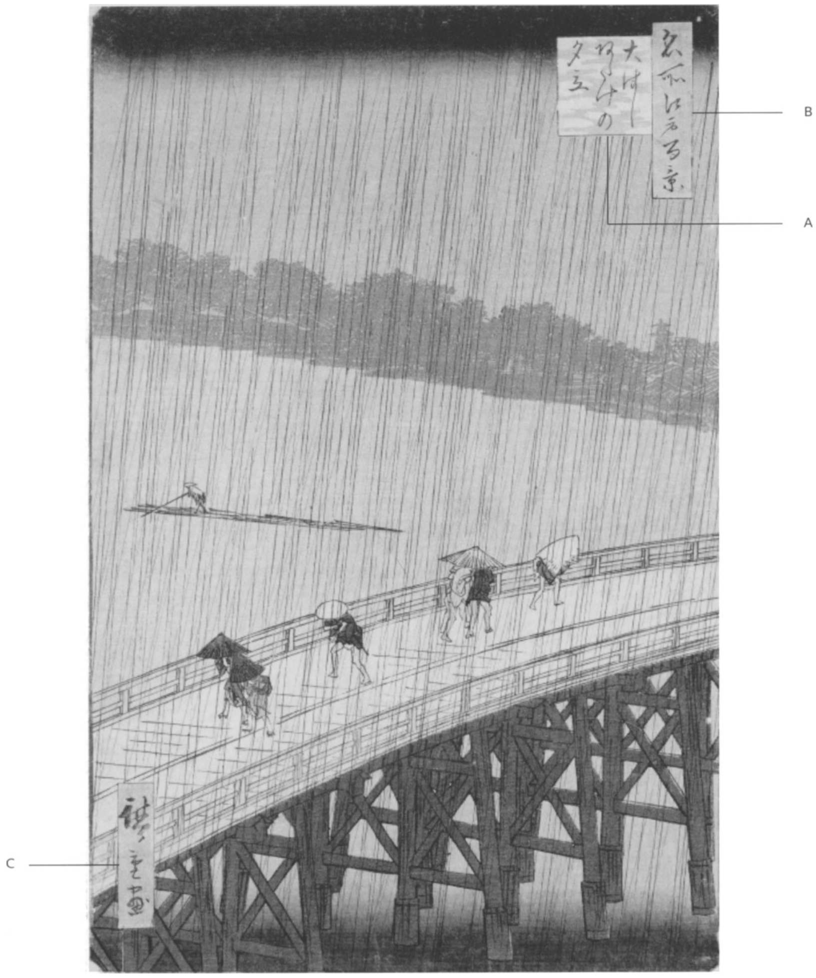
The characters in the cartouches at the top are not all easy to interpret, but the bottom three are literal copies from Hiroshige's print (compare figs. 132g and 132h). On the left is the artist's name and the title, while the name of the series is given on the right. The fact that Van Gogh reproduced the original characters from the blocks of text at the bottom of his painting does not seem to be accidental. He evidently knew that such blocks in Japanese prints contained information about the maker and the print, so the characters in the painted versions were not added 'purely for their decorative and associative value', as Roskill believed.[14]

12 The borders can be read in full apart from the cartouches at the top, which contain unrecognisable characters.
13 To sum up, each border contains a text which is at least partly intelligible in Japanese. The left border reads 'Eight views of Yoshiwara'. The name of the district in which Nishikigi's brothel was to be found, New Yoshiwara, can be read in the lower border. The name of her brothel, Daikokuya, is in the right border, and 'Eight views of Yoshiwara' is repeated in the top border.
14 Roskill 1970 I, p. 80.



132g Vincent van Gogh, ***Bridge in the rain: after Hiroshige*** (cat. 132). The numbers correspond to those in fig. 132f, and the letters A, B and C refer to the cartouches in fig. 132h.

Characters in borders
Top: 木吉原八景吉長入内 [5, Yoshiwara-hakkei, yoshi, naga, iri[?], uchi]
Right: 大黒屋錦木長原八景 [1-5, naga, wara, hakkei]
Bottom: 新吉原大丁目町一表 [12-14, 1, 10 & 11, 8 & 9, omote(?)]
Left: 吉原八景長大屋木 [Yoshiwara-hakkei, naga, 1, 3, 5]
Cartouches
Top right
  Square: 大内長 ? ? [1, uchi, naga, ?, ?]
  Long: ? ? ?
Top left: ?, hara (or 14, wara from Yoshiwara-hakkei), ?



132h Utagawa Hiroshige, *Afternoon shower on the Great Bridge near Atake*, 1857. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

The cartouches are in old Japanese script, with the modern transcription below.

A: 大橋あたけの夕立 [Ōhashi Atake no yūdachi (Afternoon shower on the Great Bridge near Atake)]
B: 名所江戸百景 [Meisho Edo hyakkei (One hundred famous views of Edo)]
C: 廣重画 [Hiroshige ga (Image by Hiroshige)].

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
Bonger 1890, no. 54 [Fantaisie japonaise (Pluie)]; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 104, vol. 2, pl. CII; De la Faille 1939, p. 186, no. 233; De la Faille 1927, ill. p. 81; Baard 1946, p. 17; London etc. 1947-48, p. 30, no. 29; Tralbaut 1954, pp. 33, 34; Amsterdam 1958, no. 207; Orton 1969, p. 20; De la Faille 1970, pp. 172, 173, 626; Roskill 1970 I, pp. 80, 81; Roskill 1970 II, pp. 17, 18; Orton 1971, p. 11; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 47, 127, note 69, 157, 184, 235; Hulsker 1977, pp. 286, 288, 289; Amsterdam 1978, p. 18; Hulsker 1980, pp. 286, 289; Amsterdam 1987, p. 336, no. 1.177; Paris 1988, pp. 162, 163, no. 62; Glasgow/Amsterdam 1990-91 II, p. 165, no. 42; Van Bremen-Ito/Van Rappard-Boon 1992; Kyoto/Tokyo 1992, pp. 76, 77, no. 10; Hulsker 1996, pp. 286, 288, 289; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 120, 123, 124; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 54, 55, 60, 63; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 68, 285, 307.

EXHIBITIONS
1905 Amsterdam I, no. 94 [Dfl. 600]; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 36; 1927 Paris, no cat.; 1930 London, no. 18; 1930 Amsterdam, no. 36; 1930 Hilversum, no cat. known; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1946-47 Liège, Brussels & Mons, no. 67; 1947 Paris, no. 68; 1947 Geneva, no. 69; 1947 Groningen, no. 46; 1947-48 London, Birmingham & Glasgow, no. 29; 1948 Bergen & Oslo, no. 21; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 103; 1949-50 New York & Chicago, no. 52; 1950 Hilversum, no. 21; 1951 Lyon & Grenoble, no. 20; 1951 Arles, no. 20; 1953 The Hague, no. 91; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 86; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 82; 1954 Zürich, no. 22; 1954-55 Bern, no. 14; 1955 Antwerp, no. 209; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 116; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 32; 1956 Leeuwarden, no. 20; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 37; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 29; 1960-61 Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg & Toronto, no. 32; 1963 Amsterdam & Baden-Baden, no. 120; 1963 Humlebæk, no. 24; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 24; 1971-72 Paris, no. 50; 1972 Munich, no. 653; 1976-77 Tokyo, Kyoto & Nagoya, no. 40; 1988 Paris, no. 62; 1990-91 Glasgow & Amsterdam, no. 42 [only Amsterdam]; 1992 Kyoto & Tokyo, no. 10; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2003 Amsterdam I, no. 161.

133
Courtesan: after Eisen

Paris, October-November 1887
Oil on cotton
100.7 x 60.7 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 116 V/1962
F 373 JH 1298

This, the third of Van Gogh's *Japonaiseries*, is not a landscape but the figure of a courtesan – a logical successor to the previous two works (cats. 131, 132). Rather than surrounding the scene with Japanese characters he now placed the panel with the woman in an outer setting of bamboos by the waterside. He was evidently very satisfied with the result, for he repeated the central scene in his portrait of Père Tanguy (fig. 133a), where all the other reproductions are of genuine Japanese prints.

The central image comes from a print by Keisai Eisen (1790-1848), who was less well known than Hiroshige. Van Gogh did not imitate the actual woodblock print but a reproduction of it in which the courtesan is reversed left for right relative to the original (figs. 133b, 133c). That illustration was part of the cover of a double issue of *Paris Illustré* published in May 1886 that was devoted entirely to Japan. The copy Van Gogh used was preserved in the family collection but is no longer in pristine condition, for it has discoloured severely compared to other copies (fig. 133d).[1]

The subject of Eisen's print is a courtesan, who is identified as such by the position of her *obi*, or sash, which is tied at the front, not the back.[2] She is a high-ranking courtesan, a so-called *oiran*, as shown by her many tortoiseshell *kogi*, long hairpins.[3] She is wearing an interestingly decorated *uchikake*, the most ornate form of the kimono, which nowadays is commonly worn as a wedding dress. The decoration consists of a dragon in the water (its natural habitat, according to the Japanese myth), which splashes as it swirls around, as can be seen at the bottom of the robe. The dangling section of the *obi* has a related motif of a frieze of bats with their wings outstretched. The decoration of the underlying clothing is less macabre, consisting as it does of flowers and abstract patterns.

Van Gogh did not understand all the details of Eisen's scene, such as the lavish decoration of the kimono. He depicted the bats and the flowers but failed to spot the dragon. Since he copied only the tail of this mythical beast it seems likely that he interpreted it as an incomprehensible, abstract motif. The splashing waves are missing, and the seething water has been turned into a spiral. There is also a typical misreading in the right sleeve of the kimono, where the dragon's claw of the original has been interpreted as the woman's right hand.

By surrounding his imitation of Eisen's print with another scene, Van Gogh was following the cover of *Paris Illustré*, where the reproduction was placed against the backdrop of a blossoming tree. This form of presentation, with borders around the main scene in which further information was often given about the subject, was a tradition going back to 17th-century printmaking, but it was applied in late 19th-century graphic art and magazine illustrations with a new level of refinement. When combining two images, artists and designers often chose a relatively flat depiction of a print or reproduction for the central one, setting it off against the *trompe-l'oeil* effect of the border around it (fig. 133e). Van Gogh seems to have

1 It is doubtful whether Van Gogh bought this issue immediately after it was published. He only became interested in Japan and its woodblock prints at the end of that year, and there are reasons to believe that he did not see the issue until the second half of 1887. The firm for which Theo worked, Boussod, Valadon & C[ie], became joint owners of the fashionable magazine some time between May 1887 and January 1888, and Vincent's brother may well have got hold of a copy of the Japan issue in that period. In April 1887 *Paris Illustré* announced that it was going to become a weekly, but that did not happen until 7 January 1888, by which time Theo's firm was joint owner. The subject of the May 1886 issue, which contained an essay by Tadamasa Hayashi, would have been chosen by the magazine's director, Charles Gillot, who was very interested in Japan (Weisberg 1990, p. 186, no. 336).

2 For different impressions of the print see Shizuoka/Aichi 2001, p. 90, nos. 82, 83. De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 105, described the figure as a male actor impersonating a courtesan, but that is based on an incorrect interpretation of the scene, the model for which had not yet been identified.

3 Welsh-Ovcharov in Toronto/Amsterdam 1981, p. 114. The origin of the term *oiran* is explained in Becker 1971, pp. 21, 22, 44-50.



133 Courtesan: after Eisen



133a *Portrait of Père Tanguy* (F 363 JH 1351), 1887. Paris, Musée Rodin.

deliberately imitated that in his painting, for the central scene is rendered as a flat print while the outer one has some depth and perspective.

The decoration at the edges consists of a bank by the waterside with bamboo, most of the details of which were taken from Japanese models. The stems on the right seem to have been borrowed from a reproduction in the same issue of *Paris Illustré* (fig. 133f),[4] and in order to add a touch of variety Van Gogh added some curved ones at top left in what may be an allusion to a print of a bamboo grove by Katsushika Hokusai (fig. 133g), which would have been a knowing wink to connoisseurs.[5] The frog and toad on the water lily leaf are a literal quotation from a print of 1883 by Utagawa Yoshimaru (1844-1907; fig. 133h), while the two cranes come from a print by Satō Torakiyo (fig. 133i).[6] The source for the boat with the two figures at the top has hitherto been unidentified, but it too was based on a motif from the latter print, although it is barely recognisable as such.[7] Van Gogh did not give the boat the high prow it has in the original, largely flattened out the curve of the gunwale, and was forced by lack of space to make the foremost figure sit down. However, it is clear that he did model the boat on the one in Torakiyo's woodcut from the 'hump' on the back of the figure seated on the right, because that cannot be anything but the *obi* of the kimono-clad woman in the print. It is unlikely that the water lilies are based on a Japanese model, for they are quite rare in prints, so this would have been Van Gogh's own invention, probably his only one, in order to fill up the border.

He also adapted the style of the border to that of oriental graphics by choosing bright colours and clearly defined outlines, as if the scene was itself a Japanese woodblock print. He also followed that example by omitting the horizon. Despite these attempts to make the scene look as lifelike and Japanese as possible, it is purely imaginary. Bamboos are not reeds and do not grow in water, and one of the frogs on the water lily leaf is not a frog at all (although Van Gogh may not have known that) but a toad, which as a land and nocturnal animal would never have been seen in a sunny, watery setting.

4 As pointed out in Tralbaut 1954, p. 28. Roskill 1970 II, p. 21, cast doubt on the connection, whereupon this source was wrongly forgotten.
5 This suggestion was made by Welsh-Ovcharov in Toronto/Amsterdam 1981, p. 115, note 7, although she regarded that print merely as the model for the details of the bamboo. Van Gogh was very keen to own Hokusai's *One hundred views of Mount Fuji*, as he told Theo from Arles (letter 640). The entire series ran to three volumes, but in response to Vincent's urging Theo bought only a late edition of the second volume (originally printed in 1835); see Amsterdam 2006, p. 316, no. 476.
6 He had these woodcuts in his collection. Yoshimaru's, which Tralbaut 1954, p. 29, recognised as the model, is now in the collection of the Van Gogh Museum (Amsterdam 2006, p. 273, no. 391). Cooper 1957, esp. pp. 203, 204, identified Torakiyo's woodcut as the other model. That print, which Van Gogh depicted in the background of a self-portrait of 1889 (F 527 JH 1657), later came into the possession of Paul Gachet Sr, who would have been given it when Van Gogh was living in Auvers.
7 Kind communication from Tomoko Murayama.



133b Cover of *Paris Illustré* 4 (1886), nos. 45, 46, 1 May, titled *Le Japon*. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



133c Keisai Eisen, *Courtesan (oiran)*, c. 1830-46. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



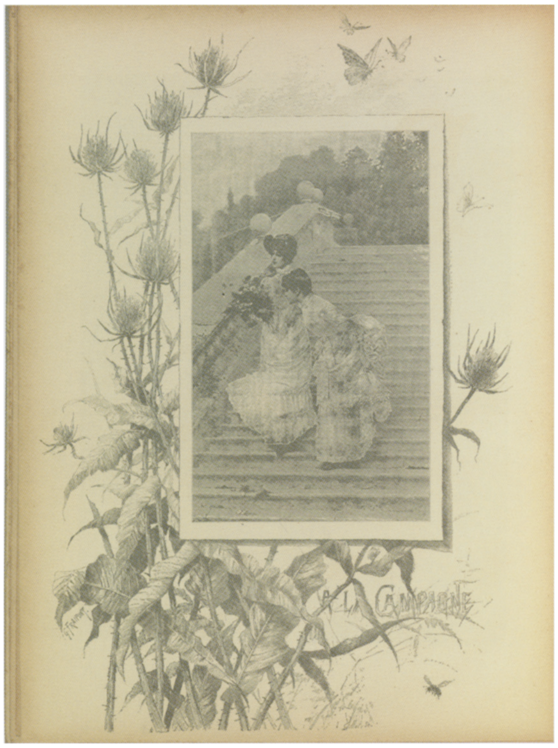
133d Cover of *Paris Illustré* 4 (1886), nos. 45, 46, 1 May, titled *Le Japon*. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

In common with Van Gogh's model of the May 1886 issue of *Paris Illustré* (fig. 133b), the surrounding scene was intended to elucidate the central image. The subject of a stretch of water with frogs and cranes may appear to have little in common with a woman of easy virtue, but some of the details show that Van Gogh intended them to identify her profession. The word for crane in French, *grue* is also a slang expression for a prostitute, while frog, *grenouille*, is used of a woman with a bad reputation.[8] The natural habitat of the latter animal, a pool of water, was used by Van Gogh himself as a term for a brothel, as emerges in a letter of 1888 in which he speaks of 'all the tarts and other pond-life in the Arles stewpond' ('toutes les grues et grenouilles de la grenouillère d'Arles', literally: 'all the cranes and frogs in the Arles frog pond') [687]. In short, Van Gogh used the surrounding decoration as an indirect but unequivocal allusion (for those in the know) to the profession of the beautifully dressed woman. She is a courtesan who lives in a pool populated by cranes and frogs, that is to say in a house of ill repute.[9]

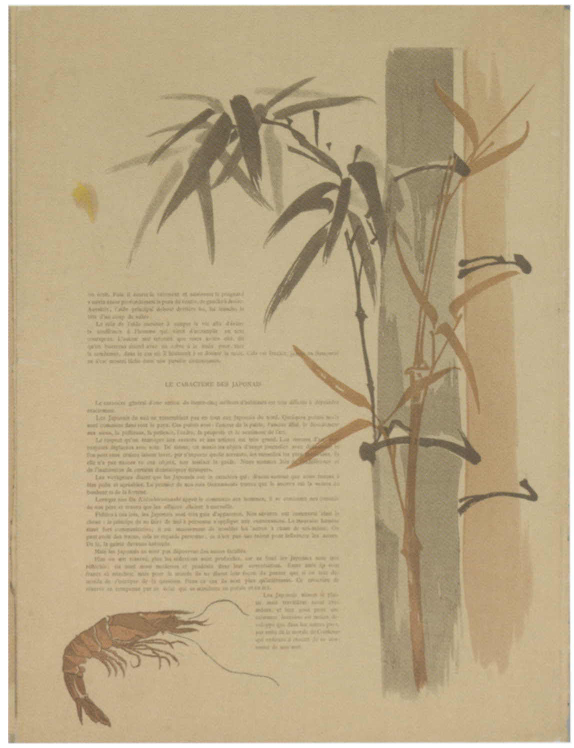
Van Gogh's need to highlight the woman's occupation would have been prompted by the cover of *Paris Illustré*. There she is shown against the backdrop of a tree in blossom, and one can easily understand that he could have regarded this symbol of a poetic, innocent Japan as misleading the viewer as to the more prosaic truth about the woman's occupation.[10] That would have given him the idea of suggesting what it actually was in the decoration around his own central image, which would have raised a smile from lovers of Japanese art, provided they were familiar with the May issue of *Paris Illustré*.

In order to transfer the illustration on the cover of the magazine Van Gogh used the same method as he had for his two previous *Japonaiseries* (cats. 131, 132). He attached the tracing paper (fig. 133j) to the cover with drawing pins (the matching

8 This was first pointed out by Welsh-Ovcharov in Toronto/Amsterdam 1981, p. 115, note 6, and was picked up and expanded by Pickvance in New York 1984, p. 39.
9 In other words, the painting is the very opposite of the posters of the restaurant and seaside resort of La Grenouillère near Bougival with which Ronald Pickvance associated it (New York 1984, p. 39).
10 This was all well known to connoisseurs (kind communication from Matthi Forrer, Leiden, Museum Volkenkunde), but there is not the slightest reference to it in the essay by Tadamasa Hayashi in the May 1886 issue of *Paris Illustré*, which was written for 'a broad audience with simplified concepts' (Weisberg 1990, p. 186, no. 336), which may well have been all the more reason for Van Gogh to allude to the woman's occupation in the borders.



133e Charles Gillot and G. Fraipoint after Vittorio Corcos, *A la campagne*, in *Paris Illustré* 3 (1885), no. 24, 1 January, p. 30. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



133f Illustration from *Paris Illustré* 4 (1886), nos. 45, 46, 1 May, p. 71. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

holes are still visible in each) and drew the woman's outline and some of the patterns in her robe with graphite, which he reinforced with ink here and there. He then pencilled in a grid with lines approximately 2.6 cm apart. As with his *Flowering plum orchard: after Hiroshige* (cat. 131), he appears to have used the old French system of *pouces* (1 *pouce* = approximately 2.7 cm) and not the metric system.[11] He also sketched in some of the details in more complicated passages, like the hand and some of the decoration of the kimono. He transferred this design to his primed support, scaling the grid up to twice its original size with pencil before accentuating it with a deeper black, probably charcoal, in the central part. Small sections of the grid are visible with the stereomicroscope between the thick brushstrokes.

The support is finely woven cotton, with a thin layer of coarsely ground natural barytes (p. 110, fig. 22).[12] Van Gogh used exactly the same support and ground for three other paintings from this period (see cats. 124, 130 and fig. 124c) (Table 8, nos. 71-73).[13] The *Courtesan* support is attached to a stretcher with the stamp of the firm of Tasset et L'Hôte on the back (fig. 133k and fig. 3 on p. 95).[14] It measures 100.7 x 60.7 cm, which is not a standard size, so it must have been made specially.

Van Gogh used the grid to copy the courtesan's outlines with thin blue-green paint and then applied loose washes of the same colour to fill in the lower section of the decorative border and part of the central scene and insert several broad, horizontal lines in the top of the border. Those washes are not related to the forms in the finished picture.

He took the colour scheme in the reproduction of Eisen's print as the basis for his own version, but made changes to bring it more into line with his own colour theory, as he had done in the other two *Japonaiseries* (cats. 131, 132). For instance, he largely adopted the red from the reproduction but made most of the blue passages

11 There were 12 *pouces* to a *pied*, and at approximately 2.7 cm 1 *pouce* was more than 1.5 mm longer than an English inch (2.54 cm). Those old measures were also the basis for the standard sizes of canvas in France; see Callen 2000, pp. 18, 19.
12 Van Gogh had used absorbent calcium carbonate grounds for his two earlier *Japonaiseries* (cats. 131, 132).
13 Otterlo 2003, pp. 181-84.
14 See p. 93 for this firm.



133g Katsushika Hokusai, *Mount Fuji seen through a bamboo grove*, from *One hundred views of Mount Fuji*, 1835, vol. 2. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



133h Utagawa Yoshimaru, *New prints of worms and insects*, 1883. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



133i Satō Torakiyo, *Geishas in a landscape*. Formerly London, Courtauld Gallery.

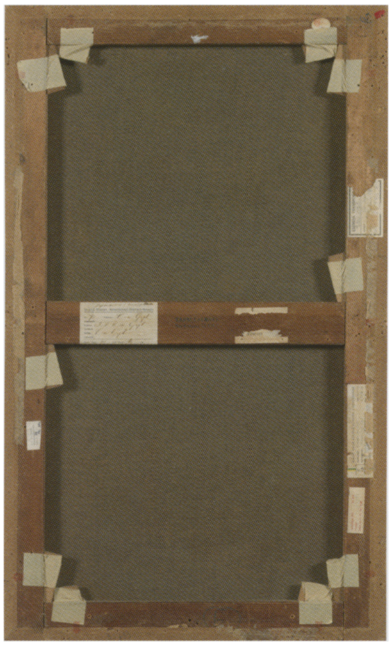


133j Tracing of the cover of *Paris Illustré* (F – JH -), 1887. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

a contrasting green. The kimono is black, as it is on the magazine cover, but Van Gogh used a 'warm' variant mixed from various pigments. The woman's black hair was given a varied filling with blue and dark red as well as black. The grey *kogi* were turned a bright blue that was repeated in the water. This, together with the decision to change the white of the background into a yellowish orange means that he allowed two complementary contrasts to predominate: red against green and blue against orange-yellow. These two colour pairs recur in the outer scene, where the yellow-orange and green bamboo stems and the red-rimmed water lilies stand out attractively against bright blue water.

Van Gogh chose a limited number of bright pigments, as he had done for his first two *Japonaiseries* (cats. 131, 132): emerald green, red lead, vermilion, cobalt blue and chrome yellow. Once again he also used an abundance of cochineal on a tin substrate mixed with a little Kopp's purpurin. He followed his previous translations of Japanese prints by departing from the graphic nature of his model and adopting a lively touch and an impasted, 'three-dimensional' treatment. The buttery paints were applied with long and short strokes, and Van Gogh put so much pressure on his brush that he pushed the paint up into thin ridges on either side of the strokes. He gave the paint surface a pronounced relief by stacking these brushstrokes one on top of the other after the first ones had partly or completely dried.

As in the other Paris paintings, the once radiantly wine-red colour of the cochineal on a tin substrate has now disappeared. It has not only become brownish but white, and has a network of stress cracks (p. 137, fig. 65). Fortunately, the rest of the picture has forceful colouring, which is largely due to the thickness of the paint. It is known from a photograph that it originally had a dark-coloured flat frame which, on the evidence of the colour composition, was probably red (fig. 133l).



133k Photograph of the reverse of cat. 133.



133l Photograph of the Van Gogh gallery in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, c. 1920. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet.

Provenance
See Note to the reader

1887-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1917-19 on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1962 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1931-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Literature
Bonger 1890, no. 52 [Fantaisie japonaise]; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 105, vol. 2, pl. CII; De la Faille 1939, p. 187, no. 234; Tralbaut 1954, pp. 22-30; Amsterdam 1958, nos. 212, 214, 216-21; London 1968-69, p. 65, no. 78; Orton 1969, p. 21; De la Faille 1970, pp. 173, 626; Roskill 1970 II, pp. 20, 21; Orton 1971, p. 11; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 47, 113, 114, 235; Hulsker 1977, pp. 286, 288, 289; Amsterdam 1978, p. 18; Hulsker 1980, pp. 286, 289; Toronto/Amsterdam 1981, pp. 114, 115, no. 10; New York 1984, pp. 38, 39, no. 5; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 202, 203, 336, no. 1.178; Amsterdam 1990, pp. 96, 97, no. 33; Amsterdam 1991, pp. 13, 16, 17; Heijbroek 1991, p. 208, ill. 50; Tokyo/Amsterdam 1991-92, p. 112, no. 75; Kyoto/Tokyo 1992, p. 82; Ogawa 1992; Pulverer 1992, p. 36; Beebee 1994, pp. 113-16; Hulsker 1996, pp. 286, 288, 289; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 120, 122, 124, 126; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 45, 52, 54, 60, 71; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 69, 285, 306; Letters 2009, letter 686, note 21.

Exhibitions
1905 Amsterdam I, no. 93 [Dfl. 900]; 1920 New York, no. 38 [$9,000]; 1928 Berlin, no. 35; 1928 Frankfurt am Main, no. 24; 1928 Vienna, no. 22; 1928-29 Hanover, Munich & Leipzig, no cat., no. 17, no cat. known; 1929 Utrecht, no. 25 [not for sale]; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 73; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 104; 1953 The Hague, no. 92; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 87; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 83; 1954 Zürich, no. 21; 1954-55 Bern, no. 15; 1955 Antwerp, no. 211; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 118; 1957 Marseille, no. 37; 1958-59 Paris, no. 396; 1960 Bordeaux, no. 139; 1960 Paris I, no. 38; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 33; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 33; 1965 Berlin, no. 35; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 40; 1968 Tokyo, unnumbered; 1968-69 London, no. 78; 1971-72 Paris, no. 51; 1972 Bordeaux, no. 13; 1972-73 Strasbourg & Bern, no. 14; 1981 Toronto & Amsterdam, no. 10; 1984 New York, no. 5; 1990 Amsterdam, no. 33; 1992 Amsterdam, no. 75; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 37; 2005 Tokyo, Osaka & Nagoya, no. 64.

134
Piles of French novels

Paris, October-November 1887
Oil on canvas
54.0-54.2 x 73.4 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 21 V/1962
F 358 JH 1612

Van Gogh was fascinated by depictions of people reading, as shown by his lifelong admiration for a work like Meissonier's *Reader* (fig. 134a).[1] His love of the subject was inextricably bound up with his own 'irresistible passion for books' [155], which was based on the idea that literature was indispensable for the development of the mind. He must have nodded in enthusiastic agreement at Victor Hugo's remark in *William Shakespeare*: 'What has the human race been since the beginning of time? A reader. [...] Humanity reading is humanity knowing'.[2]

In 1881-82 Van Gogh made four drawings of old men reading, but he did not return to the subject until 1888.[3] In the meanwhile he had not lost interest in the theme by any manner of means, and nor did he in Paris either. He was fascinated by modern depictions of people reading, as is clear from his correspondence. For example, in the spring of 1887 he was impressed by Albert Besnard's *Modern man* (Paris, Beauvais, Musée Départemental de l'Oise), which shows a man reading and according to Van Gogh neatly captures the mentality of the 19th century.[4] In the closing months of 1887 he also saw Puvis de Chavannes's *Portrait of Eugène Benon* (fig. 134b), which he lauded for similar reasons. He said that the sitter, 'an old man reading a yellow novel', was 'an ideal for me' [829].[5]

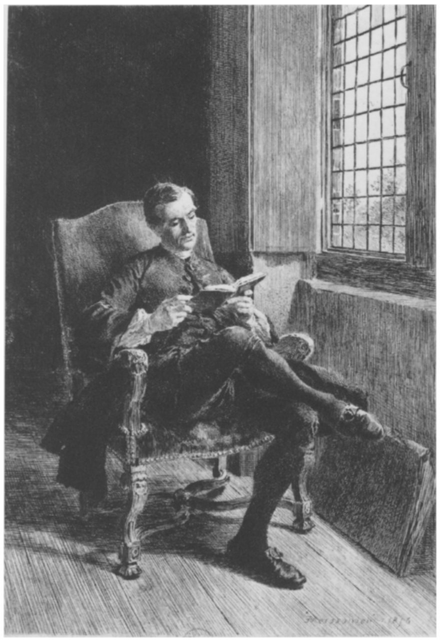
However, his appreciation of paintings of people reading did not prompt him to try his hand at the subject himself while he was in Paris. He limited himself to depicting books alone, possibly due to his proverbial lack of human models. At any rate, there are four paintings of modern, naturalistic novels from the period: *Three novels* (cat. 82), *Still life with plaster statuette and books* (fig. 57e), and two larger works with almost identical compositions: *Piles of French novels and roses in a glass ('Romans parisiens')* (fig. 134c) and the present painting (cat. 134).

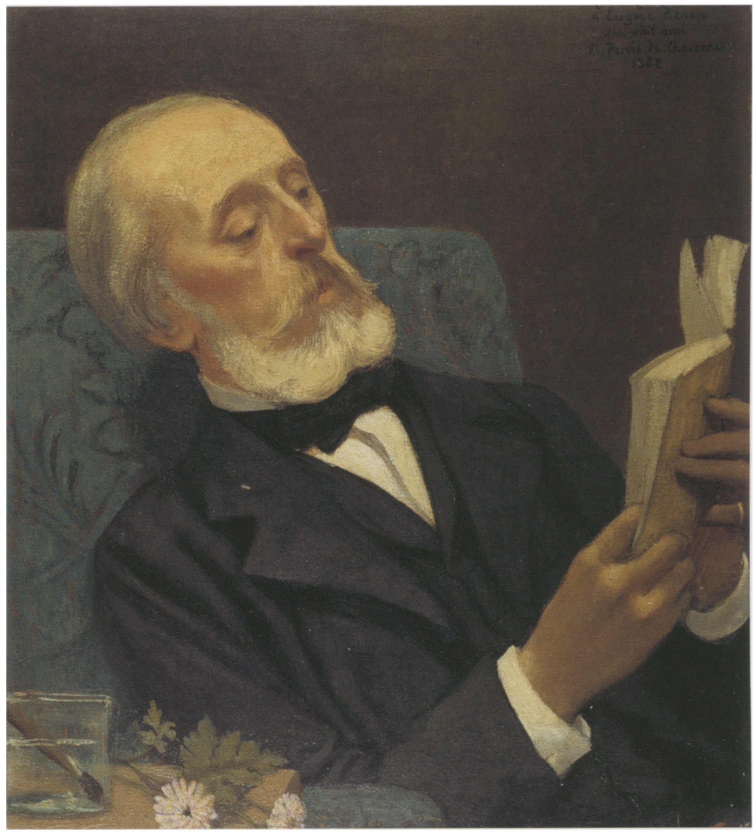
Van Gogh included the titles of novels in the first two pictures (cat. 82, fig. 57e) but omitted them in the other two (cat. 134, fig. 134c). However, the covers show that they were contemporary French paperbacks. Most of them are yellow, like the covers that the Paris publisher Charpentier had introduced for modern realistic novels in the 1870s.[6] In addition, Van Gogh himself called the larger picture of the two '*Romans parisiens*' (Parisian novels) [584], which is an explicit allusion to the usual subtitle of literature dealing with life in the French capital.[7]

1 This subject is discussed at length in Sund 1992, pp. 209-13. Van Gogh's admiration for Meissonier's *Reader* is expressed in letter 768, among others.
2 Victor Hugo, *William Shakespeare*, Paris 1864, p. 128, and see also p. 130: 'Une alimentation de lumière, voilà ce qu' il faut à l'humanité. La lecture, c'est la nourriture' ('What humanity requires, is to be fed with light; such nourishment is found in reading'). The English is from the translation by Melville B. Anderson, Chicago 1911, which can be consulted at http://www.ebooksread.com. This book played an important part in Van Gogh's decision to become an artist, on which see letters 155, esp. note 9, and 158.
3 The Dutch drawings are F 897 JH 63, F 966 JH 280, F 1001 JH 278 and F 1683 JH 279. In Arles he painted *Woman reading a novel* (F 497 JH 1632) and *Portrait of Marie Ginoux ('The Arlésienne')* (F 488 JH 1624). The first painting actually shows someone reading, but that is merely suggested in the second one, in which the woman has an open book on the table in front of her. There are also books in the four later versions of *L'Arlésienne* from 1890 (F 540 JH 1892, F 541 JH 1893, F 542 JH 1894 and F 543 JH 1895) and the portrait of Dr Gachet (F 753 JH 2007), but they are all closed, so Van Gogh was depicting the sitters not so much as readers but as modern people who sympathised with the Realists' ideas.
4 Letter 798. This painting was in the *Exposition internationale de peinture et de sculpture. Sixième année*, Paris (Galerie Georges Petit) 1887, 8 May-8 June, p. 3, no. 2.
5 The portrait was in the *Exposition de tableaux, pastels, dessins par M. Puvis de Chavannes*, Paris (Galeries Durand-Ruel) 1887, 20 November-20 December, no. 20. See also letter 655 for a description.
6 Néo (pseudonym of Paul Signac), 'IVe Exposition des Artistes Indépendants', *Le Cri du Peuple*, 29 March 1888, accordingly described the books in the second version (fig. 134c) as 'volumes Charpentier', suggesting that all the books in the picture were from this Paris publisher.
7 On Theo's recommendation it was exhibited with *Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette* (cat. 115) and *Allotments in Montmartre* (fig. 115a) at the annual Les Indépendants show in 1888. 'I think it's a very good idea', Van Gogh wrote, 'that you put the books in the Independents' too. This study should be given the title: "Parisian novels"' [584]. He was referring to the large version, as is clear from letter 590. That is also the version mentioned in Hartrick 1939, p. 46, and Coquiot 1923, p. 136. For a summary of the reception of Van Gogh's work at this exhibition see Dorn in Essen/Amsterdam 1990-91, p. 90, note 3, with a supplement in Martigny 2000, p. 139. It is usually asserted that Van Gogh's title for the second version is a reference to Jean Richepin's *Braves gens. Roman parisien*, which he depicted in his *Three novels* (cat. 82). Although perfectly possible (see also note 10), there is no direct evidence for it. *Roman parisien* was a fairly common subtitle. Alphonse Daudet, for instance, used it for *Les rois en exil* (1879) and *L'Evangéliste* (1883), which Van Gogh also knew; see letters 274, 464, 502.



134 Piles of French novels





134a Jules Ferdinand Jacquemart after Ernest Meissonier, *Reader*, 1856. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet des Estampes.

134b Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, *Portrait of Eugène Benon*, 1882. Private collection.

These paintings of books can be regarded as an ode to the reading of literature, and especially to the writings of the French Realists, as pointed out in the entry on *Three novels* (cat. 82).[8] Van Gogh felt that authors like Emile Zola and the De Goncourt brothers fulfilled the human need (and duty) to look at contemporary life unflinchingly and open-mindedly, 'despite its inevitable sadnesses' [829]. That was the only way of getting a grip on life and its purpose, and the full reading table in this painting testifies to that idea. Since we know from his title for the largest painting (fig. 134c) that they were novels about Paris, he evidently wanted to say that it was very important to confront modern life in his temporary home.[9] He was not very happy in that metropolis, and from that point of view his reading of those books would have prompted him to reflect on his own situation.[10]

The centrepiece of both works is a table with some papers and a mass of books: 21 in this painting and 22 or 23 in the slightly larger one (cat. 134, fig. 134c). The positions of the books are almost the same in both pictures apart from one, which has been moved from one pile to another. There are also differences, though, with two more books in the large canvas and the additional element of a glass with roses. The background is also more detailed, with wallpaper with what looks like an oriental motif in the background and what appears to be the back of a chair on the right.[11] The wall behind the chair is divided into two compartments, the one on the right possibly being a door.[12]

It is assumed on the basis of the differences in both size and style – fairly sketchy and spontaneous in the smaller painting as against more detailed and thoughtful

8 Van Gogh's admiration for French naturalism is discussed in Sund 1992, pp. 13-163, Van der Veen 2003 and Van der Veen 2009.
9 Sund 1992, p. 146, believed that in the second version of *Romans parisiens* Van Gogh 'apparently [wanted] to express the energy, fecundity, and promise of renewal that the artist found in modern literature'. The one thing that the scene does not do is proselytise for the depiction of contemporary Parisian subjects, because they had retreated into the background at this period, late 1887. It is clear from letters 582, 603 and 695 that Van Gogh was not at all happy in Paris.
10 Douglas Druick and Peter Zeegers rightly refer to the content of Jean Richepin's *Braves gens. Roman parisien* in this connection (Chicago/Amsterdam 2001-02, p. 90), in which Van Gogh would have recognised his own dilemma – to leave Paris or stay. The book is an account of the ups and downs of two Parisian Bohemians, a musician and a mime artist. The former leaves Paris, the latter stays. The musician prospers in his life and art, while the mime artist descends into poverty and alcoholism.

11 The wallpaper pattern is identical to that in two still lifes from early 1887 (cats. 80, 89), although there it is vertical, not horizontal.
12 This may be a view of a specific room: the living room in Theo's apartment in rue Lepic, as Welsh-Ovcharov suggested in Toronto/Amsterdam 1981, p. 117. There was a door to the corridor close to the wall in the left-hand corner of the room as seen from the window (see cat. 95, note 4, for a description of the apartment).



134c *Piles of French novels and roses in a glass ('Romans parisiens')* (F 359 JH 1332), 1887. Private collection.

in the other one – that the work in the Van Gogh Museum was the first of the two. Some authors, though, have dated it to Arles, citing the stylistic affinity with *The bedroom* of 1888.[13] Since the larger painting (fig. 134c) quite definitely dates from Paris, they concluded that Van Gogh painted the same subject from memory. That, though, is not plausible. It is true that he repeated scenes there on more than one occasion, but a second, usually more considered version was always made with the first one within easy reach. That was the only way he could make any improvements. A small detail in the large version is also significant. It can be seen with the naked eye that he made a change on the left, by the table. At some stage he decided to make the line of the table run more parallel to the horizontal strips of the wall decoration, but since the initial position of the edge of the table was identical to that in the smaller version (cat. 134), the painting in the Van Gogh Museum clearly preceded the larger one.

That first version is on a fairly open-weave, *paysage* 20 canvas with a commercial double ground of a layer of calcium carbonate and a little lead white topped with a layer of lead white and a little calcium carbonate (Table 3.4, no. 15). Van Gogh rarely used that kind of ground in Paris, and the only other time it has been found on a canvas bought in that period is on cat. 108, which also dates from 1887.[14]

The scene is on top of a charcoal underdrawing, the lines of which were smudged during the painting process. Small bits of that initial sketch are visible to the naked eye (fig. 134d). Infrared reflectography revealed that Van Gogh drew the outlines of the books absolutely precisely and without hesitation. This design differs from others of the period, in which the outlines are only roughly indicated and details and shaded areas are often included.[15]

Van Gogh departed from his usual practice in other respects as well. He followed the underdrawing almost literally in the paint, and the books were very rapidly filled within their drawn outlines, much like a colouring picture. One distinctive aspect of this clear-cut approach is that he made deliberate use of the light ground (which has darkened a little with age). He left it uncovered in the pages of the book in the foreground and by the books with the red ribbon markers behind it to suggest the covers, and elsewhere in order to indicate the outlines of the books.

13 F 482 JH 1608. Nordenfalk/Meyerson 1946, p. 133, note 1, repeated in Nordenfalk 1947, p. 143, note 12, and adopted in Hulsker 1996, pp. 367, 370, 371, no. 1612, Amsterdam 1987, p. 342, no. 1.211, and, with some reservations, by Welsh-Ovcharov in Paris 1988, p. 150, note 6.
14 The same ground has been found beneath four Paris paintings on top of recycled portrait studies from Nuenen (cats. 99-101, 129, see cat. 101).
15 It was only in the self-portraits that he defined the outlines precisely. The style of drawing in *Romans parisiens* is close to that of his drawn studies of the Paris ramparts (SD 1719r JH 1279 and SD 1719v JH 1285); see Drawings 3, pp. 289-93.





134d Detail of the underdrawing of cat. 134.

134e Detail of the bottom edge of cat. 134 showing remnants of dark pink.

Having painted the books he concentrated on the background followed by the foreground before returning to other parts of the composition. The picture is broadly painted throughout, although with a great feeling for variety. The background is smoothly executed, as are most of the books, but after painting an initial smooth layer for the tablecloth he covered it lavishly with impasted strokes, as well as adding a second, thicker layer of a different hue to several of the book covers.

The colours of the work have altered drastically through ageing. The tablecloth has a streaky grey appearance with thick strokes of shocking pink. Van Gogh used cochineal on a tin substrate which has faded badly, as it has in other Paris works.[16] Its colour is reasonably well preserved in the impasto, but it was once a somewhat brighter pink, as revealed by parts of it beneath the frame that were protected from the light. The paint has suffered worst at the places where it was applied as a glaze over the light underlayer. Blotchy traces of the original purplish pink are now only found at the lower edge and underneath the frame (fig. 134e). This means that the colours of the thick strokes and the glazing were originally closer together, making the tablecloth more uniform, comparable to the book covers. This brought the still life more into line with Bernard's recommendation to work 'in accordance with a system of almost flat tints'.[17]

It is not only the colour of the lakes that has changed over time, but also that of most of the books. In 1928 De la Faille described the hues of the covers as 'mineral yellow, Naples yellow, ochre, violet, red and yellow', and although none of the books is now 'violet' one is grey, so that would have been the more purplish one.[18] The shadows on the tablecloth and the pages of the open book in the foreground are also grey, so one suspects they have undergone the same discolouration.

Van Gogh painted the background and probably the orange-yellow books with the unstable pigment chrome yellow. It has darkened, as can be seen from the lighter, fresher hue at points where it was protected by the frame. If one takes this discolouration into account, one sees that Van Gogh used two complementary contrasts in the painting: yellow against purplish pink, and green against orange-red, with the first contrast being more important than the second.

The painting was executed quite quickly, almost roughly, and even looks unfinished here and there, although it should be realised that its sketchy nature is heightened by the discolouration. Van Gogh would certainly have regarded it as a study because of its spontaneous execution, and not 'a definitive form of painting' [494], which is probably how he saw the second, larger and more detailed version (fig. 134c), in which he tried to perfect the scene, although not in the same style. The two canvases are in fact based on contradictory painterly approaches.

The first version (cat. 134) was an attempt to make an oil painting in the style of a Japanese print. The composition is conceived in terms of discrete blocks, and like his first experiment with this genre, the copy after Hiroshige's *Plum tree teahouse at*

16 The presence of carmine acid has been demonstrated, but the substrate has not been analysed. However, the severe fading of the cochineal indicates it is on tin, which is almost the only type of pigment that Van Gogh used in this period.
17 Bernard 1952 II, p. 313: '[...] selon un système de teintes presques plates'; on which see pp. 80-85.
18 De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 100 : '[...] jaune mineral, jaune de Naples, ocre, violet, rouge et jaune'. In the second version, moreover, this book has a pink cover (fig. 134c).



134f Edgar Degas, *Portrait of Edmond Duranty*, 1878-79. Glasgow, The Burrell Collection.

Kameido (cat. 131), Van Gogh combined them with a painterly touch. He was looking for a happy combination of what are in essence two contradictory elements, but he then abandoned the search, possibly worried about pursuing this new, revolutionary approach.[19] In the final months of his stay in Paris he largely reverted to the rough application of the Neo-Impressionist style, which is well illustrated by the second version of his piles of novels (fig. 134c). In it he opted for a systematic pattern of small dashes and loose strokes supplemented with hatchings, comparable to those in *Portrait of Etienne-Lucien Martin* (cat. 136) and *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 137).[20]

Several details indicate that the second version can be regarded in every other respect as an elaboration of what he had only set down rudimentarily in his first attempt. For example, he now gave the covers the suggestion of printing, and added 'text' to the pages of the open book in the foreground. He also improved the perspective of the books, although that of the table still looks a little odd.[21] He also added a glass with roses in it, further enriching the meaning of the scene.[22]

Initially Van Gogh had wanted the books to symbolise the effort to understand modern times, but now, by including flowers, he was referring to another piece of worldly wisdom, which was the need to comprehend the constantly recurring, eternal life forces of nature or, to put it in his own words: 'a something on High' [401].[23] He was still depicting those two spiritual mainstays separately at the beginning of the year in his pendants *Three novels* (cat. 82) and *Basket of hyacinth bulbs* (cat. 81), but he now combined them into a single scene, as he did in the almost contemporaneous *Still life with plaster statuette and books* (fig. 57e), in which he depicted flowering roses with a modern novel and a plaster statuette.[24]

Although there are no figures in either version of *Romans parisiens*, they must nevertheless be seen as attempts to depict a reader. Van Gogh adopted the indirect approach. In the first painting it is the viewer who is actually the reader, for in the foreground there is an open book. He moved it a little further away in the second picture, severing that connection, but he once again communicated the idea of the presence of a passionate reader of novels by showing the living room and the back of a chair, which makes it clear that we are seeing that reader's home.

Van Gogh may have got his idea for the full reading table from Degas's imposing *Portrait of Edmond Duranty* of 1878-79, in which the critic is seen in his study at his desk piled high with books, paperwork and prints in front of the shelves of his large

19 It was not until Arles that he returned to this style (see pp. 85-87. As already noted, the 'Japanese' style of the painting led many authors to place it in 1888 (see note 13).
20 He retained the colour composition of yellow (or green-yellow) against red (or purple-red) and green against red (or red-orange), but brought the contrasts completely into balance with each other. This picture will also have to be investigated for colour changes, but the tablecloth certainly had a violet hue in addition to the yellow and green, as can still be seen at the edges. For the style see also cat. 136, note 16.
21 See Van Uitert 2002, p. 44, for the perspective in the painting.
22 Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov thought that the roses were an allusion to the Van Gogh coat of arms, which contains three roses (Toronto/Amsterdam 1981, p. 117), but that does not seem very likely, given Vincent's difficult relationship with his family.
23 For Van Gogh's conception of the 'something on High' see Van Tilborgh 1998, pp. 40-45.
24 The plaster torso of Venus accompanying the two main elements in *Still life with plaster statuette and books*, probably symbolises the subject of love, which in Van Gogh's view was also important for comprehending modern life, as argued in Van Uitert 1983, pp. 58-60.

library (fig. 134f).[25] These surroundings identify Duranty as the man of letters *pur sang*, and Van Gogh will have concluded that he had no need to portray a reader, leaving books to convey that impression, just as the drinker is suggested by the full glass in *Café table with absinthe* (cat. 90).

The dating of the two versions of *Piles of novels* to the last three months of 1887 is based on the following considerations. Van Gogh would have got the idea of including a flower in a glass from Puvis de Chavannes's portrait of Eugène Benon, in which there are chrysanthemums beside the reading figure (fig. 134b).[26] He had admired that painting at an exhibition between 20 November and 20 December 1887, which is why it is assumed that the second version of the novels was painted around then (fig. 134c).[27] That establishes the date of the picture in the Van Gogh Museum: not long before that, so in October-November 1887.

25 Welsh-Ovcharov in Paris 1988, p. 150, was the first to propose Degas's portrait of Duranty as a possible source of inspiration, and backed her suggestion with the description of it in J.-K. Huysmans, *L'art moderne*, Paris 1883, p. 134, which Van Gogh had supposedly read. There is no evidence for this, but there is indeed a very good chance that he knew the pastel. It was still in Degas's possession at the time, but the preliminary study belonged to Michel Manzi, Boussod et Valadon's printer (Lemoisne 1984, vol. 2, nos. 517, 518), whom Theo knew well and who had probably put him in touch with Degas. Around the turn of 1887-88 Theo also sold Manzi a painting by Toulouse-Lautrec, and he and the printer were probably in closer touch than before. On this see Thomson 1999, pp. 70, 107, and Schimmel 1991, p. 123, letter of 9 January 1888.

26 This was suggested in Amsterdam 1990, p. 88; for the exhibition see note 5 above. However, Van Gogh spoke of roses in his later description of the picture: '[...] with beside him a rose and watercolour brushes in a glass of water' [829], switching the chrysanthemums of Puvis's original with the roses from his own *Romans parisiens*, as it were.

27 It can clearly be seen that the glass with roses was only added at a late stage in the painting process.

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
Bonger 1890, no. 51 [Livres]; Druet 1920, no. 20111; De la Faille 1927, ill. p. 91; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, pp. 100, 101, vol. 2, pl. xcviii; De la Faille 1939, p. 184, no. 230; Nordenfalk 1947, p. 142; London etc. 1947-48, p. 30, no. 32; Sutton 1948; Graetz 1963, pp. 52, 53; London 1968-69, p. 71, no. 98; De la Faille 1970, pp. 168, 625; Roskill 1970 ii, pp. 72, 73; Orton 1971, p. 10, note 25; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 49, 109, 143, 161, 162, 194, 231; Hulsker 1977, pp. 368, 370, 371; Hulsker 1980, pp. 368, 370, 371; Toronto/Amsterdam 1981, pp. 117, 118, no. 12; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 234, 235, 342, no. 1.211; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 90; Bohde/Gutbrod 1990, pp. 37, 38; Essen/Amsterdam 1990-91, pp. 90, 91, no. 16; Kyoto/Tokyo 1992, pp. 78, 79, no. 11; Sund 1992, p. 123; Hulsker 1996, pp. 367, 370, 371; Zemel 1997, p. 122; Washington/Boston 2001-02, pp. 158-60, 219; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 121, 123, 124; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 53, 65, 74, note 84; Brescia 2005-06, pp. 378-80, no. 89; Van der Veen 2009, pp. 186, 187; Coyle 2007, pp. 360-62; Seoul 2007-08, p. 246; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 65, 285, 307.

Exhibitions
1892-93 Amsterdam, no. unknown [possibly cat. 82 or F 359 JH 1332]; 1896-97 Paris, no cat. [Ffr. 300] [possibly cat. 82]; 1905 Amsterdam i, no. 73 [Dfl. 1,000]; 1908 Paris, no. 31 [Ffr. 3,500]; 1908 Munich, no. 17 (Dfl. 1,500); 1908 Dresden, no. 17 [Dfl. 1,500]; 1908 Frankfurt am Main, no. 19 (for sale); 1908 Zürich, no. 11; 1908 The Hague & Amsterdam, no cat. known, no. 22; 1908 Berlin ii, no cat. known [Dfl. 1,600]; 1908 Berlin iii, no. 34; 1909-10 Munich, no. 9, Frankfurt am Main, Dresden & Chemnitz, no cat. known [Dfl. 2,500] [not in Chemnitz]; 1911 Amsterdam, no. 14 [Dfl. 3,500]; 1911-12 Hamburg, no cat. known [DM.? 3,000]; 1911-12 Bremen, no cat.; 1912 Dresden & Breslau, no. 21 (not for sale); 1923-24 London, no. 17; 1924 Basel, no. 23 (Dfl. 9,500); 1924 Zürich, no. 44 (Sfr. 23,000); 1924 Stuttgart, no. 19 [Dfl. 9,500]; 1925 Paris, no. 20 [not for sale]; 1925 The Hague, no cat. [Dfl. 9,500]; 1926 The Hague, no. 123?; 1926 Munich, no. 2092 (not for sale); 1927 Paris, no cat.; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 46; 1933 Amsterdam, no. 114; 1937 Oslo, no. 10; 1938 Copenhagen, no. 17; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1946 Maastricht & Heerlen, no. 39; 1946 Stockholm, Gothenburg & Malmö, no. 28; 1946 Copenhagen, no. 28; 1946-47 Liège, Brussels & Mons, no. 63; 1947 Paris, no. 60; 1947 Geneva, no. 61; 1947 Groningen, no. 45; 1947-48 London, Birmingham & Glasgow, no. 32; 1948 Bergen & Oslo, no. 17; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 99; 1950 Hilversum, no. 15; 1951 Lyon & Grenoble, no. 25; 1951 Saint-Rémy, no. 25; 1951-52 Nijmegen & Alkmaar, no. 9; 1952 Enschede, no. 36; 1952 Eindhoven, no. 19; 1953 Zundert, no. 18; 1953 Hoensbroek, no. 31; 1953 IJmuiden, no. 17; 1953 Assen, no. 15; 1954 Zürich, no. 33; 1954-55 Willemstad, no. 12; 1955 Palm Beach, Miami & New Orleans, no. 12; 1955 Antwerp, no. 176; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 87; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 34; 1956 Breda, no. 90; 1956-57 Rotterdam, no. 1; 1957 Marseille, no. 25; 1958 Paris, no. 42; 1959 Boston, Milwaukee, Columbus & Minneapolis, no. 4; 1960-61 Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg & Toronto, no. 34; 1961 Amsterdam, no. 48; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 34; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 34; 1963 Humlebæk, no. 25; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 25; 1965 Charleroi & Ghent, no. 15; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 22; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 41; 1968-69 London, no. 98; 1969-70 Los Angeles, Saint Louis & Philadelphia, no. 22; 1970-71 Baltimore, San Francisco & New York, no. 22; 1971-72 Paris, no. 53; 1972 Bordeaux, no. 15; 1972-73 Strasbourg & Bern, no. 15; 1981 Toronto & Amsterdam, no. 12; 1990-91 Essen & Amsterdam, nos. 16 and 15 respectively; 1992 Kyoto & Tokyo, no. 11; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.; 2001-02 Washington & Boston, unnumbered; 2005 Tokyo, Osaka & Nagoya, no. 51; 2005-06 Brescia, no. 89; 2007-08 Seoul, unnumbered.

135
Red cabbages and onions

Paris, October-November 1887
Oil on canvas
50.0-50.2 x 64.3 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 82 V/1962
F 374 JH 1338

In this still life we are presented with two sprouting onions and six red cabbages, one of which has been cut in two, while the leaves of another have been peeled back. As in his earlier *Apples, Grapes* and *Quinces, lemons pears and grapes* (cats. 126-28), the vegetables are displayed on a cloth, although it is barely recognisable as such. Van Gogh subordinated space and perspective to the expression of a flat plane in imitation of a Japanese woodblock print.[1]

However, unlike Bernard, he did not paint decorative blocks of colour with heavy outlines (fig. 135a). He combined the search for a flat effect with the use of adjoining lines of different hues and colours derived indirectly from the Neo-Impressionist model. The vertical hatchings at the top of this painting are equally idiosyncratic, and as a stylistic device appear to have been borrowed from the pastels of Degas (fig. 85c). However, alongside these modern, contemporary devices we find Van Gogh's familiar painterly impasto, although only by the stalks of the cabbages, where he was unable to continue with his interplay of lines.

The colour composition of this still life has been thrown severely out of balance by fading. The tablecloth looks a greyish blue, but the original purple can be seen at the edge where it was covered by the frame (fig. 135b). Van Gogh mixed this colour from cochineal on a tin substrate, lead white and cobalt blue, as can be seen in paint cross-sections. The deep wine-red colour of the cochineal has now disappeared almost completely, leaving only the light blue component. The purplish cabbages were painted with another kind of red lake, so have retained their colour well.[2]

This means that they were originally on a similar purplish cloth, with the yellowish onions and the background forming a complementary contrast (p. 133, fig. 57). Van Gogh had worked with that contrast before in his *Grapes* (cat. 127), but in reverse, because there the main colour is yellow, with purple as the contrast colour. He also applied the theory of complementary contrasts to the cabbages themselves, which he painted with the three primary colours, sometimes mixed with white, while alongside the yellow in the onions he mainly used the secondary colours of green, orange and the now faded purple.

The painting is on an unusual and rather expensive support of fine linen twill of the standard *paysage* 15 size (Table 3.6, no. 61). Van Gogh had long preferred grounds with a rough texture, but until now he had only used cheap supports with an irregular ground.[3] Canvases with a twill weave have a pronounced texture, and it is conceivable that he was following the example of painters like Claude Monet and Camille Pissarro, who believed that this specific support provided a good basis for their brushwork.[4]

The canvas has a commercial, warm pinkish-grey ground applied in two layers over a slightly pigmented sizing (p. 112, fig. 29). Van Gogh used canvases with exactly the same weave, sizing and ground for two other ambitious paintings

1 On this see the pp. 82-85.
2 The SEM EDX analyses of purple paint revealed a substrate of aluminium or aluminium and calcium, but the pigment was not identified with HPLC. Paint sample analyses show that Van Gogh used both Kopp's purpurin and cochineal on this type of substrate, which yielded a more stable colour than when tin was the substrate. On this see p. 136.
3 For example, he used rough wooden panels (cats. 81, 82), *carton* with a granular ground (cat. 125) and thinly prepared, loosely woven canvas (cats. 87, 106), and often preferred to reuse paintings which he only loosely masked or scraped off.
4 On this see Callen 2000, pp. 37-44.



135 Red cabbages and onions



135a Emile Bernard, *Earthenware pot and apples ('Premier essai de Synthétisme en de Simplification')*, 1887. Paris, Musée d'Orsay.

during the final months of his stay in Paris: *Portrait of Etienne-Lucien Martin* (cat. 136) and *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 137), and possibly for his *Interior of the restaurant of Etienne-Lucien Martin* as well (fig. 136a).[5] These similarities strongly suggest that the supports came from the same roll of prepared linen.

Red cabbages and onions was painted very swiftly, seemingly in a single session. Although no trace of an underdrawing has been found, Van Gogh had the design firmly in his mind's eye. He began with the background, painting the greenish yellow area at top right first. He then moved to the tablecloth, where he reserved space for the cabbages, which were painted directly on top of the ground, the slightly pinkish colour of which contributed to their finished appearance. The yellowish onions, though, were given a separate underlayer in a contrasting colour: now bluish but perhaps purplish originally.

The twill weave of the support is clearly visible, although not in the impasted passages by the cabbages and onions. This set up a varied interplay between the diagonal lines of the weave and the brushstrokes (p. 112, fig. 30). That is particularly noticeable in the background, where the hatchings cross the direction of the weave. The technique is closely related to that employed in *Interior of the restaurant of Etienne-Lucien Martin* as well (fig. 136a) but not to that in *Portrait of Etienne-Lucien Martin* (cat. 136) or *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 137), which have a more complex structure. The still life, with its simple, direct manner, and the interior scene would have preceded the two portraits.

Van Gogh was mixing different and contradictory artistic movements in this attempt to combine a composition conceived in separate blocks with Neo-Impressionist colour theory, hatchings, paint relief and canvas texture. In that respect the painting looks like a rejection of dogmatism in the arts, and can even be seen as an answer to Bernard's refusal to exhibit with Signac. Van Gogh took him severely to task over this at the end of 1887. 'If, therefore, you've already considered that Signac and the others who are doing pointillism often make very beautiful things with it – Instead of running those things down, one should respect them and speak of them sympathetically, especially when there's a falling out. Otherwise one becomes a narrow sectarian oneself, and the equivalent of those who think nothing of others and believe themselves to be the only righteous ones' [575].



135b Detail of cat. 135.

5 For the canvas of the latter work see cat. 136, note 12.

Provenance
See Note to the reader

Literature
De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 105, vol. 2, pl. CII; De la Faille 1939, p. 213, no. 274; London 1968-69, p. 69, no. 90; De la Faille 1970, pp. 173, 626; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 110, 231; Hulsker 1977, pp. 296, 298, 301; Hulsker 1980, pp. 296, 298, 300, 301; Amsterdam 1987, p. 336, no. 1.180; Paris 1988, pp. 160, 161, no. 61; Hulsker 1996, pp. 288, 296, 298, 300, 301; Tokyo 1996, pp. 60, 61, 141, no. 8; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 115, 121, 122, 124, 127, 130, 137, note 53; Hendriks/ Geldof 2005, pp. 56, 57, 59, 61, 69, 74, note 71; Coyle 2007, p. 347; Van Heugten 2008, pp. 45, 46; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 64, 284.

Exhibitions
1928 Berlin, no. 36; 1928 Frankfurt am Main, no. 25; 1928 Vienna, no. 23; 1928-29 Hanover, Munich & Leipzig, no cat., no. 18, no cat. known; 1929 Utrecht, no. 26 [not for sale]; 1930 London, no. 16; 1930 Amsterdam, no. 37; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 65; 1948 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 105; 1949 Middelburg, no. 17; 1951 Lyon & Grenoble, no. 36; 1951 Arles, no. 36; 1954-55 Bern, no. 21; 1955 New York, no. 11; 1955 Antwerp, no. 173; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 85; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 19; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 35; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 35; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 34; 1968-69 London, no. 90; 1969-70 Los Angeles, Saint Louis & Philadelphia, no. 20; 1970-71 Baltimore, San Francisco & New York, no. 20; 1988 Paris, no. 61; 1996 Tokyo, no. 8; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no cat.

136
Portrait of Etienne-Lucien Martin

Paris, November 1887
Oil on canvas
65.5 x 54.3 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 125 V/1962
F 289 JH 1203

It took a long time to pin down the identity of this man with the dark moustache and chocolate-brown eyes. Theo's widow, Jo van Gogh-Bonger, described him as 'an innkeeper' in 1905.[1] Her brother Andries had called the picture 'Patron de restaurant' in his 1890 inventory of Theo's collection, and although there is a difference between an inn and a restaurant, Jo's later description was probably based on that.[2] Given Van Gogh's proverbial shortage of models, the sitter would have been someone in his close circle of acquaintances, and only one person answers that combined description:[3] Etienne-Lucien Martin, owner of the Grand Bouillon-Restaurant Du Chalet at 43 avenue de Clichy.[4]

Martin's establishment, which was a 'restaurant populaire' with simple meals at reasonable prices served by waitresses, probably opened in June 1885.[5] On 1 March 1887 Martin turned the place into a café-concert, although still with inexpensive food.[6] Van Gogh became a regular visitor in 1887, and evidently got to know the owner.[7] He staged an exhibition there of his own work and that of his friends in November and early December 1887.[8] One of the other exhibitors, Arnold Hendrik Koning (1860-1945), recalled the place as 'a kind of hall with a big glass roof like the central station, where it was good and cheap, and the walls were extremely suitable for exhibiting. The boss was an enterprising fellow but very quick-tempered, the doctor had said that he always had to count to 20 if he got angry. That did him a lot of good'.[9] However, the café-concert's days were numbered, and it was declared bankrupt on 30 June 1888.[10]

Van Gogh depicted the 'director of the café-concert' in his working clothes of a simple jacket and matching skullcap.[11] The latter item was worn indoors and never outside, which is how we know that Martin is also portrayed in another picture by

1 Amsterdam 1905, no. 60: 'Portret van een kroegbaas'.
2 Bonger 1890, no. 55.
3 Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 226, elaborated further by the same author in Paris 1988, p. 27, note 32.
4 The name 'Grand Bouillon-Restaurant Du Chalet' was on Martin's menus, for which see note 7. The only other restaurateur that Van Gogh knew was Père Bataille, who ran a cheap eating-house with his wife in rue des Abbesses. It had opened back in 1850, so Bataille must have been quite old, which rules him out as the sitter. For his establishment see Coquiot 1923, pp. 118, 119, and Drawings 3, cat. 288, pp. 212, 213.
5 On *bouillons* as cheap places to eat see Drawings 3, cat. 287, p. 210. The hall had previously been a ballroom, but that closed in 1884 and in June 1885 a 'certain Martin jeune' opened a restaurant there (Emmanuel Patrick, 'Bals disparus, Le Bal du Châlet', *Le Courrier Français*, 21 and 27 June 1885, quoted by Merlhès 1989, p. 55, note 1). In Paris 1988, p. 166, and Drawings 3, p. 246, it is wrongly assumed that part of the ballroom still existed. The Martin mentioned above was probably our Etienne-Lucien Martin, but he was not yet the owner. That was 'Martin et Compagnie', consisting of Jean Louis Michel Martin and Eduard Jacques Félix Pinon (Paris, Archives de Paris, photocopy in the Van Gogh Museum).
6 The waitresses are mentioned in a letter from A.H. Koning to A. Plasschaert, 8 May 1912 (b 3024). The conversion of the restaurant into a café-concert took place before 1 March 1887, and is described in the official confirmation of Martin's bankruptcy on 30 June 1888 (Paris, Archives de Paris, photocopy in the Van Gogh Museum). Martin had evidently taken over the restaurant from the two previous owners but did not own the building. In Paris 1988, p. 166, note 4, and Drawings 3, pp. 246, 248, note 7, it is assumed that the café-concert and the restaurant were housed in two buildings and were two separate concerns, but that is illogical and at odds with what is stated in the declaration of Martin's bankruptcy, which speaks of 'la transformation du restaurant en café-concert'. The change was not a major one, though, because Koning, who was in Paris in September 1887 and visited the café-concert, as it then was, still referred to it as an 'eethuis' (eating-house) (b 3024).
7 On Van Gogh as a regular patron see the letter from Koning mentioned in note 6. There are four menus from Martin's Du Chatel in the family collection, the backs of which Van Gogh used for sketches (see Drawings 3, cats. 287, 300, 321, 322), all of which probably date from the second half of 1887. One of them is of musicians (SD 1714 JH 1160).
8 Van Gogh mentions the exhibition in letters 640 and 782. It is not known exactly when it took place, but Gauguin saw it so it must have been after 13 November, when he returned from Martinique. It closed soon after it opened (see note 19), which is why we have dated it November-early December 1887.
9 Letter from Koning mentioned in note 6: '[...] een soort hal met een grote glazen kap als 't centraal station, waar 't goed en goedkoop was, en de wanden zich uitstekend leenden voor exposeren. De baas was een ondernemende vent maar erg driftig, de dokter had gezegd dat hij altijd eerst tot 20 moest tellen als hij kwaad werd. Dat dee hem toen veel goed'.
10 Declaration of Etienne-Lucien Martin's bankruptcy, 30 June 1888, Archives de Paris (photocopy in the Van Gogh Museum). The bankruptcy explains why Andries Bonger described the portrait in 1890 as 'Patron de restaurant'. He recognised Martin's face but had forgotten his name because he had dropped out of sight.
11 Until now the skullcap has been regarded as 'un signe de sa profession' (Paris 1988, p. 27, note 32).



136 Portrait of Etienne-Lucien Martin



136a *Interior of the restaurant of Etienne-Lucien Martin* (F 549 JH 1572), 1887. Private collection.

Van Gogh (fig. 136a).[12] In that view of a restaurant dining room there is a man among the patrons wearing a skullcap the same colour as his jacket. He is also as solidly built as Martin in this portrait, so that is a view of the owner of the café-concert seated in the interior of his own establishment. The furnishings are simple, the customers are being served by waitresses, and the room looks large.[13] There are also paintings hanging on the walls, all of which suggests that Van Gogh depicted the eatery at the time of the exhibition he had organised, with the owner in the middle.

After the many self-portraits of the previous months (see cats. 116-20, 125, 129, 130) Van Gogh had gained enough self-confidence by the autumn of 1887 to try his hand at portraits. 'I'm studying this now in portraits,' he wrote to his sister Willemien [574], probably referring to his first attempt of the portrait of Père Tanguy.[14] It is of a comparable size to Martin's, being a standard *figure* 15 (65 x 54 cm). That was a great step forward from his earlier portraits and self-portraits,[15] and shows how ambitious he was, as does the more expensive support of Martin's picture. It is a finely woven linen twill ready-prepared with a warm pinkish grey ground (Table 3.6, no. 62). He used exactly the same kind of canvas for two or possibly three other, equally ambitious paintings from the same period (cats. 135, 137, and perhaps fig. 136a).

No trace of an underdrawing was found beneath the portrait, which may indicate how much confidence Van Gogh now had in his capacities as a portraitist. It was painted in the course of several sessions. Examination of the surface with the stereomicroscope and analysis of paint samples reveal that, surprisingly, the jacket and the background originally had different colours, and rather bright ones at that. The jacket had been executed in deep blue, green, pale pink and chocolate brown, and since those colours were also used for Martin's eyes it can be assumed that the face was painted in the same session as the clothing. The collar and neck were enlivened with vivid blue and pink outlines, while the background was made a deep green.

The paint of that version was already dry when Van Gogh began modifying it, with pale nuances toning down the initially bold colours. He added flesh tones mixed with white and overpainted the jacket with purple, which has now faded to a washed-out greyish blue. The bottom and right-hand edges, where the paint has been covered by the frame, give an idea of the original colour (fig. 136b). Analyses of paint samples have shown that the purple consisted of a mixture of cochineal on

12 It was Ronald Pickvance who suggested to Welsh-Ovcharov that the painting might be of Martin (Paris 1988, p. 27, note 32). However, that did not lead to a redating of the work, which had traditionally been placed in the summer of 1888. In Amsterdam 1990, p. 80, no. 25, though, it was proposed moving the view of the restaurant interior from Arles to Paris on the evidence of its style. This is also borne out by the support, which judging by a photograph is a twill canvas (see cat. 135). It is also listed in the 1890 inventory as a Paris work (Bonger 1890, no. 55). F 549a JH 1573 is almost exactly the same scene, but is only known from a poor colour photograph. It is more spontaneous so would have been painted on the spot, while F 549 JH 1572 (fig. 136a) was probably made in the studio. It is odd that Van Gogh chose a smaller size for the second, 'improved' version.

13 The scene is described as a 'restaurant populaire (15)' in Bonger 1890, no. 80. It is probably the 'Salle de restaurant, avenue de Clichy' mentioned by Gustave Coquiot in his list of works that Van Gogh painted in Paris (Coquiot 1923, p. 309). There was only one 'restaurant populaire' on avenue de Clichy in the period 1886-88 (Welsh-Ovcharov 1971 I, p. 9), and that was Martin's establishment.

14 That first attempt at Tanguy's portrait, F 364 JH 1352 (fig. 128e), measures 65 x 51 cm. The second version is F 363 JH 1351 (fig. 133a). The first painted study was preceded by a drawing: F 1412 JH 1350.

15 Van Gogh's second, highly worked up version of Tanguy's portrait was even larger at 92 x 75 cm.



136b Detail of cat. 136 showing colour preserved under the frame.



136c Anonymous artist, *Lotus and finch*, late 19th century. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

a tin substrate, Kopp's purpurin, natural indigo and white, with the change in colour being largely attributable to the fading of the cochineal. Martin's skullcap, which is now the same greyish blue as the jacket, would have been done with the same paint mixture, so it too must originally have been purple. The pale and white touches in the background may also have been purple or pink originally, but that is impossible to check because of the severely yellowed layer of varnish. What is certain, though, is that the colour composition of the portrait was initially based on the contrast of the purple in the clothing with the yellow and orange in the face.

Van Gogh made skilful use of the twill pattern of the canvas, as he did in *Red cabbages and onions* (cat. 135) and *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 137). Its structure is clearly visible, mainly in the clothing, where the diagonal grain of the linen is accentuated by the largely slanting brushwork. Here the paint has been dragged out with the brush, a feature that it shares with *Red cabbages and onions*. It differs from that work, though, in that the linen is completely covered in the background, first with horizontal and then with vertical strokes. The face was modelled with small strokes, and the grain only contributes to the effect occasionally (p. 113, fig. 31). In a departure from the still life Van Gogh made full use of the resistance offered by the structure of the linen when applying his paint. He chose thick, 'dry' paint which is 'impeded', as it were by the fibres of the cloth and only grazes the nubs. Working layer upon layer in this way, he built up an extremely tactile, almost crumbly paint surface. He applied the same effect in his large version of the portrait of Père Tanguy, and even more markedly in his *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 137).

Both the impasto and the type of canvas suggest that Van Gogh wanted to give the portrait the look of a crêpe, 'i.e. Japanese prints printed on crinkled paper like crêpes', as his English friend Hartrick thought when he saw the second version of *'Romans parisiens'* (fig. 134c).[16] Van Gogh owned several such woodcuts (fig. 136c, which he showed to Hartrick). 'It was clear that they interested him greatly, and I am convinced, from the way he talked, that what he was aiming at in his own painting was to get a similar effect of little cast shadows in oil paint from roughness of surface'.[17] There are some spots of paint on one 'crêpe' in the family collection (fig. 136c), so it can be assumed that it served as a source of inspiration for one of Van Gogh's paintings.

16 Hartrick 1939, p. 46. Van Gogh achieved the effect described by Hartrick in *Romans parisiens* not so much by exploiting the texture of the canvas as by applying dry brushstrokes on a rough underpainting.
17 Ibid.

This portrait is so similar to *Self-portrait as a painter* (cat. 137) in particular that there can be no doubt that it was painted at the end of Van Gogh's time in Paris, although not in the very last months,[18] when an argument between the artist and the restaurant owner led to the exhibition being closed, possibly around the beginning of December, not long after it had opened.[19] This means that the portrait of the enterprising but quick-tempered Martin must have been painted before then. There is no hard-and-fast evidence, but Van Gogh may have intended to give the portrait to Martin as a gesture of thanks for allowing his restaurant to be used as an exhibition hall but changed his mind after the argument. In any event, the portrait remained in his studio and later became part of the family collection.

18 It is usually dated to the second half of 1887, with only Hulsker 1996, p. 264, placing it in the winter of 1886-87.

19 The argument with Martin and the closing of the exhibition are mentioned in Cristobal 1891 and Bernard 1994, vol. 1, pp. 241, 242, 251.

PROVENANCE
See Note to the reader

LITERATURE
Bonger 1890, no. 55 [Patron de restaurant]; Druet 1920, no. 20114; De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, pp. 83, 84, vol. 2, pl. LXXXI; De la Faille 1939, p. 300, no. 415; Baard 1946, p. 17; De la Faille 1970, pp. 142, 143, 622; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 226; Hulsker 1977, pp. 264-66, 268; Hulsker 1980, pp. 264-66; Amsterdam 1987, p. 337, no. 1.186; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 86; Tokyo 1994, pp. 44, 45, 116, no. 6; Hulsker 1996, pp. 264-66; Shackelford 2000, p. 117, ill. 102; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 115, 121, 124, 129, 130; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 57, 61, 69; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 45, 285, 306; Letters 2009, letter 574, note 17.

EXHIBITIONS
1905 Amsterdam I, no. 60 [Dfl. 800]; 1908 Paris, no. 12 [Ffr. 3,000]; 1908 Munich, no. 13 (Dfl. 1,200); 1908 Dresden, no. 13 [Dfl. 1,200]; 1908 Frankfurt am Main, no. 16 (for sale); 1908 Zürich, no. 8; 1908 Berlin II, no cat. known [Dfl. 1,600]; 1920 New York, no. 61 [$8,000]; 1924 Basel, no. 21 (Dfl. 6,000); 1924 Zürich, no. 19 (Sfr. 14,000); 1924 Stuttgart, no. 7 [Dfl. 7,000]; 1925 The Hague, no cat. [Dfl. 7,000]; 1926 Munich, no. 2087 (not for sale); 1931 Amsterdam, no. 37; 1947 Groningen, no. 41; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 70; 1953 Zundert, no. 14; 1953 Hoensbroek, no. 27; 1953 IJmuiden, no. 14; 1953 Assen, no. 12; 1954 Zürich, no. 19; 1954-55 Bern, no. 35; 1955 Antwerp, no. 192; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 100; 1957-58 Leiden & Schiedam, no. 17; 1958 Mons, no. 15; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 33; 1960 Den Helder, no cat.; 1965 Lisbon, no. 59; 1971-72 Paris, no. 28; 1994 Tokyo, no. 6; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 35; 2000-01 Detroit, Boston & Philadelphia, unnumbered.

137
Self-portrait as a painter

Paris, December 1887-February 1888
Oil on canvas
65.0-65.1 x 50.0 cm
Signed and dated at bottom right in orange-red: Vincent 88
Inv. s 22 V/1962
F 522 JH 1356

Letter 626

This self-portrait signed 'Vincent' and dated '88' is the last work that Van Gogh painted in Paris.[1] As in his portrait from the autumn of 1886 (cat. 74) he shows himself with palette and folding field easel on which there is a canvas on a strainer. The composition has led many authors to suggest that both self-portraits were inspired by Rembrandt's famous one of 1660 in the Louvre, but it is doubtful that Van Gogh needed it either as a model or as a legitimation for a scene of an artist at his easel that was so common and widespread.[2]

The light is falling on the scene from the left background, as it is in Rembrandt's self-portrait, but there is no need to attribute that to any external influence. It casts plenty of light on the invisible canvas on the easel and would have been a reflection of reality. What does not rhyme with the fall of light is the light colouring of the back of the easel and the canvas, but that would have been done to maintain the balance between light and shade in the picture as a whole.

As Van Gogh wrote to his sister Willemien in a letter of June 1888, the self-portrait was the 'result of a portrait that I painted in the mirror' [626]. He portrayed himself wearing 'a blue smock of coarse linen', but interestingly he did not observe it in the mirror, as he did his head and the hand with the palette, because it is buttoned left over right (as seen by Van Gogh), as is customary with menswear. The palette in his right hand (in reality the left because of the mirror) is rectangular and looks like the one in the earlier self-portrait as a painter (cat. 74).[3] This time, though, there are two small pots clamped to it, probably one for oil and the other for a thinner, which was likely to have been turpentine. The palette has one hole for the thumb and an indentation allowing the seven brushes to be held easily. Two types of brush are depicted; flat-tipped, probably hogs' bristle brushes as used for the heavy modelling of the paint surface, and round pointed ones that were suited for the fine divisionist touches. The frayed look of one of them provides a realistic touch (p. 115, fig. 15).

The colours on the palette look chaotic, as if they were applied completely haphazardly. Some colours are depicted more than once, and there are blobs of white here and there. Unlike the palette in the earlier self-portrait (cat. 74), in which the colours may not be arranged in the manner recommended at the academies but are nevertheless neatly laid out along the edges, the paints are now in the middle of the palette and at first sight seem to be jumbled up together. However, if one ignores the many dabs and smears and focuses instead on the large dollops (fig. 137a), one finds, in addition to white, the primary colours of red, blue and yellow and the three secondaries of green, purple and orange. Unlike the other large blobs, there are two variants of orange – a dark orange-red and a lighter kind.

Analysis of these clumps of paint has shown that the blue is cobalt blue, Van Gogh's favourite blue at the end of 1887. The yellow, to the left, is zinc yellow,

1 De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, no. 522, suggested that it was painted in Arles, but was corrected by Scherjon/De Gruyter 1937, p. 28, who believed that it dated from the Paris period. That was adopted in De la Faille 1939 and has been commonly accepted ever since.
2 See, for example, Chicago/Amsterdam 2001-02, p. 92. Zemel 1997, p. 151, saw a 'pictorial conversation' with Cézanne's self-portrait now in the Bührle Collection in Zürich, but that work is no longer dated to 1885-86 but to c. 1890 (Rewald *et al.* 1996, vol. 1, p. 430, no. 670).
3 Rectangular palettes were customary in the 18th century but then fell into disuse, on which see Schmid 1966, pp. 519-21. This particular one recurs in a self-portrait of 1889 (F 626 JH 1770), so belonged to Van Gogh's standard equipment.



137 Self-portrait as a painter

which is the light variant of chrome yellow. The deep green consists of emerald or Veronese green commercially filled out with a little gypsum (see also cat. 106). There is a hint of purple in the light blue blob on the left, which was probably a deep purple originally but has become cooler due to fading of the red lake pigment that Van Gogh used.[4] The darker orange consists of vermilion with red lead, which would have been mixed by the manufacturer, as was customary at the time, although Van Gogh would have had the idea that he was buying pure vermilion. The light orange is an orange shade of cadmium yellow,[5] and the white is lead white.

In the letter to his sister Van Gogh described four of the six colours on his palette as 'lemon yellow [zinc yellow], vermilion, Veronese green, cobalt blue' [626], adding: 'in short, except of the orange beard the only whole colours, though'.[6] He evidently did not consider that his meaning was clear enough, for he then inserted 'all the colours' and 'on the palette' so that the sentence reads 'in short all the colours, except of the orange beard, on the palette, the only whole colours, though'. That did not clarify things altogether, but what he wanted to say was that he had depicted *all* (i.e. 'the only') whole colours on his palette: the three primary and three secondary colours. He did not mention purple and orange in his first list, but then spoke of orange separately as an exception, because unlike blue, yellow, green, red and purple it appears in two variants on the palette: the light orange tint of cadmium yellow already mentioned, and the ready-made mixture of vermilion with red lead, which he had used for his beard.

What all this means is that Van Gogh depicted his palette not only as a faithful record of the pigments he had used but also as a statement of his modern ideas about colour. The use of 'whole' colours had been central to his work since the autumn (see cats. 126, 127). Those pure colours had to be mixed optically by placing contrasting brushstrokes alongside and on top of each other, and he illustrated that method with this painted palette. It may look chaotic, but the colours of the different parts of the self-portrait are all grouped together (fig. 137a). The colours of his smock, for instance, form a cluster of blue with two shades of orange and white. Another cluster on the palette consists of white, green, red and mixed pink, which are the colours of his face, and there is yellow with green, the principal colours of his eyebrows and hair.

The palette thus seems to testify to Van Gogh's modern ideas about colour. What is interesting, though, is that by including two shades of orange he was also stating that this modern faith in the effect and application of colours was certainly not the be-all and end-all either.[7] System and theory are all very well, he appears to be saying, but one can also ignore them. That is clear from the self-portrait itself. White is used as a colour, and there are no contrasting strokes in the background, the illuminated parts of the face or the easel. The same applies to the beard suggested with two shades of orange, for he only used green for the shaded areas.

Van Gogh had explored the potential and limits of modern colour theory in his earlier portraits and self-portraits, and with this proudly signed self-portrait he wanted to show that he had found the golden mean, even if it was a very ambitious one. He had applied the theory fairly systematically in his *Self-portrait with grey felt hat* (cat. 130), in which he worked up both the background and the face with haloing

4 Although the paint in this passage was not sampled, the purple probably contains the same cochineal on a tin substrate as confirmed by analyses elsewhere in this painting. This unstable type of red lake tends to fade, especially when mixed with white. On this see pp. 136-38.

5 A third orange pigment, chrome orange, was found in a mixture used for the light background but is not on the palette.

6 The entire passage, which is discussed below, reads: 'a pink-grey face with green eyes, ash-coloured hair, wrinkles in forehead and around the mouth, stiffly wooden, a very red beard, quite unkempt and sad, but the lips are full, a blue smock of coarse linen, and a palette with lemon yellow, vermilion, Veronese green, cobalt blue, in short all the colours, except of the orange beard, on the palette, the only whole colours, though'.

7 It is clear that this really was a deliberate decision from the fact that Van Gogh only added the second blob of orange, the darker red kind, at the very end, when the self-portrait was already finished. It was the paint of his signature and the date '88'.



137a Detail of the palette, on which the following colours have been analysed.
1 Dark on bright blue: two layers with various mixtures of cobalt blue and lead white.
2 Darkened orange on light yellow: multiple layers with the orange consisting of red lead and vermilion and the yellow of various mixtures of cadmium yellow, zinc yellow, chrome yellow and lead white.
3 Light orange: cadmium orange.
4 Darkened red on green: cochineal lake on tin substrate with starch, on top of emerald green with gypsum.
5 Orange-red on light yellow: vermilion with a little red lake on a layer of zinc yellow and lead white.

dabs and strokes. That, though, made the face 'unrealistic', and in this new self-portrait he came up with a different solution. He now gave the background a restful tone but again chose a fairly marked haloing method for the rest of the picture.

That Van Gogh really did use the colours depicted on his palette can be seen even with the naked eye. The blue, light orange and green were used in the smock, and the two shades of orange in the beard. The contours by the hand and the palette are in cochineal on a tin substrate, which has faded and cracked, as it has in so many other of Van Gogh's works. Today one can only see the deep carmine in the depths of the cracks and in contours by the edges of the canvas that were covered by strips of paper. The 'grey-white wall' in the background was painted with a mixture of lead white and a series of bright pigments that are also found on the palette: cobalt blue, emerald green, cadmium yellow and vermilion.[8] Chrome orange was also added to the brew, and that is one pigment not represented on the palette.

In addition to being a demonstration of his modern but personal use of colour, Van Gogh regarded this work as an autobiographical document revealing something of his own rather parlous state at the end of his time in Paris. In later letters he said that 'in Paris one is always suffering, like a cab-horse' and that it was only when he got to Arles that he had 'started reflecting on things again instead of trying not to think' [582, 603]. When he left the capital he was 'very, very upset, quite ill and almost an alcoholic through overdoing it, while my strength was abandoning me' [695], and he set out to record that mental and physical collapse in this self-portrait, as can be seen from his description of it to Willemien, in which he indirectly likened himself to the Grim Reaper, the traditional personification of death. 'A pink-grey face with green eyes, ash-coloured hair, wrinkles in forehead and around the mouth, stiffly wooden, a very red beard, quite unkempt and sad, but the lips are full. [...] The figure against a grey-white wall. You'll say that this is something like, say, the face of – death – in Van Eeden's book or some such thing – very well' [626].[9]

However, this says more about Van Gogh's idea of himself during his time in Paris than about the effect of this self-portrait on the viewer, let alone about his

8 The quotation from the letter shows that the colour of the pale background was deliberate and not due to discolouration of the red lake, which was not found in the background.
9 The latter was a reference to Hein, the personification of death in Frederik van Eeden's book *De kleine Johannes*, The Hague 1887.

physical condition at the time. He felt that in those days his face was that of someone at death's door, but that would never have crossed anyone's mind were it not for his remarks to Willemien. When Jo van Gogh-Bonger met her brother-in-law for the first time in 1890 she expected to see someone who was seriously ill, but, as she later related, 'here was a sturdy, broad-shouldered man, with a healthy color, a smile on his face, and a very resolute appearance'. She added: 'of all the self-portraits, the one before the easel is most like him at that period', suggesting that in fact it was of a very healthy Van Gogh.[10]

The self-portrait, which has not a trace of an underdrawing, is on a very fine linen twill of the standard *haute paysage* 15 size (Table 3.6, no. 63). It has a warm pink-grey ground consisting of lead white with some orange ochre, bone black and umber applied commercially on top of a slightly pigmented sizing. Canvases with exactly the same weave, sizing and ground were used for *Red cabbages and onions* (cat. 135) and *Portrait of Etienne-Lucien Martin* (cat. 136), from which it emerges that all three were cut longitudinally from the same roll of cloth.[11] In *Red cabbages and onions* he applied the paint thickly in some areas and dragged it out extremely thinly in others, creating an interplay between the diagonal lines of the weave and the thick brushstrokes. In the self-portrait the paint is only thin on the back of the canvas on the easel and above all on the strainer, so that the twill weave plays an important part in the overall effect (p. 156, fig. 17). It helps to suggest the structures of the canvas and the wood, bringing the strainer forward optically in an effect which Van Gogh heightened by sharply defining its left edge by scratching it in the wet paint. The structure of the canvas provided resistance when the paint was applied thickly, and when combined with sticky 'dry' paint it gave the picture a rather sandy, almost stiff surface. He added delicate dots and dashes on top of that to echo a Neo-Impressionist approach, although his brushwork remained descriptive throughout in the sense that it followed the forms of the face and body.

Van Gogh worked on this ambitious self-portrait for a long time, stacking several layers of colour on top of each other in a number of sessions. The underlying layers were often partly or completely dry before they were overpainted. In addition to a few minor adjustments to the composition – the palette was originally a little longer and extended further beneath the blue smock – Van Gogh modified the colouring of certain passages. The grey-white wall was initially brighter and had a braided pattern of pink and blue paint at upper right. The drab canvas on the easel was also filled in with blue and pink at first, whereas Van Gogh's blue smock was very pale and not very different from the present background, but did stand out against its initially colourful incarnation.

The upshot of this long process of applying largely structured layers is a rich pattern of colour and texture reminiscent of the paint surfaces of artists whom Van Gogh admired, such as Pissarro and Monet.[12] The surface, though, recalls the so-called crêpes, Japanese woodblock prints resembling crêpe paper that were a great source of inspiration for Van Gogh at this time (see fig. 135c). The pronounced paint layer of the background, which has a faint braided pattern, was obtained by applying half-dry paint in tendrils and clots. The earlier impasto was partly flattened during the many reworkings and given new textural effects (p. 156, fig. 16). Van Gogh weakened it around the head, in particular, by repeatedly brushing over it to make

10 Letters 1958, vol. 1, p. L.
11 As, probably, was *Interior of the restaurant of Etienne-Lucien Martin* (fig. 136a); see cat. 136, note 12.
12 See cat. 135, note 4.

the head stand out better. The figure itself consists of an even thicker, now almost encrusted paint. The shadowed forms and sunken parts of the face, such as the eye sockets, still have a relatively smooth texture, but there is a marked relief in illuminated and protruding areas like the temples.

Van Gogh's hand and parts of the palette are bordered with organic red that has now degraded, and as mentioned above the left edge of the strainer is also sharply defined. On the other hand, the outlines were left hazy around the face, smock, the other sides of the strainer and the top of the palette. There are missing lines, and there are often small dabs of paint at right angles to the outline in order to blur it. When everything was good and dry Van Gogh added his signature and the year '88', first with a thin light orange and then with a thick layer of dark red-orange applied straight from the tube. A clump of that colour on the palette contains vermilion mixed with red lead, and like the signature it has an ochreous discolouration due to degradation of the red lead.[13]

13 On this see p. 134.

PROVENANCE

1888-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1909-1930 on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; 1925-52 V.W. van Gogh; 1952-60 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1960-62 Theo van Gogh Foundation; 1962 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1931-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

LITERATURE

Bonger 1890, no. 92quarto [Portrait de Vincent (15)]; Van Gogh 1905, no. 20; Hind 1911, p. 44, ill. after p. 80; Van Gogh-Bonger 1914, p. I; Bremmer 1918, vol. II, pp. 121-23, no. 81; Druet 1920, no. 7203; De la Faille 1928, vol. I, pp. 149, 150 [no ill.]; Scherjon/De Gruyter 1937, p. 28, note 3; De la Faille 1939, p. 307, no. 425; Baard 1946, p. 17; London etc. 1947-48, p. 30, no. 31; Nordenfalk 1948, p. 86; Sutton 1948; Bromig-Kolleritz 1954, pp. 29-32, 36, 37, 51-53, 57, 107; Van Gogh-Bonger 1914, p. XIII; Stellingwerff 1959, pp. 97, 98; Hammacher 1960, pp. 5, 10, 12, 22; Graetz 1963, pp. 59-65; Erpel 1964, pp. 60, 61, no. 31; London 1968-69, p. 71, no. 99; De la Faille 1970, pp. 184, 185, 228, 632; Orton 1971, pp. 8, note 22, 11, note 30; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 114, 193, 196, 197; Hulsker 1977, pp. 300, 302, 305; Hulsker 1980, pp. 300, 302, 305; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 206, 207, 338, no. 1.187; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 101; Paris 1988, pp. 174, 175, no. 68; Amsterdam 1990, pp. 98, 99, no. 34; Van Lindert/Van Uitert 1990, pp. 104, 105; Essen/Amsterdam 1990-91, p. 87; Van Tilborgh 1994, p. 6; Hamburg 1995, pp. 118, 119; Hulsker 1996, pp. 288, 300, 302, 304, 305; Zemel 1997, pp. 149, 150; Shackelford 2000, pp. 118, 121, ill. 103; Chicago/Amsterdam 2001-02, pp. 92, 93; Sapporo/Kobe 2002, p. 235; Amsterdam 2003, pp. 45, 213, 215, no. 73; Van Bommel *et al.* 2005, pp. 121, 123, 124, 126; Dorn 2005, p. 21; Hendriks/Geldof 2005, pp. 57, 61, 69; Feilchenfeldt 2009, pp. 45, 286, 307; Letters 2009, letter 626, note 15, letter 800, note 16; London 2010, pp. 130, 131, no. 68.

EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam I, no. 89 [not for sale]; 1905 Utrecht, no. 27 [not for sale]; 1905 Leiden, no. 27 [not for sale]; 1907 Rotterdam, no. 11; 1908 Paris, no. 29 [not for sale]; 1908 Berlin I, no. 14 [not for sale]; 1908 Frankfurt am Main, no. 32 (not for sale); 1908 The Hague & Amsterdam, no cat. known, no. 26; 1908 Berlin II, no cat. known [not for sale]; 1909 Berlin, no cat. [not for sale]; 1910-11 London, ex catalogue; 1914 Antwerp, no. 67; 1914 Berlin, no. 39; 1914 Cologne & Hamburg, no cat. known; 1921 Paris, no. 163; 1926 Venice, no. 23; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 41; 1929 Amsterdam, no. 30; 1930 Amsterdam, no. 64; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 58; 1935-36 New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Cleveland, San Francisco, Kansas City, Minneapolis, Chicago & Detroit, no. 38; 1937 Paris, no. 5; 1937 Oslo, no. 15; 1938 Copenhagen, no. 25; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1946 Maastricht & Heerlen, no. 40; 1946 Stockholm, Gothenburg & Malmö, no. 41; 1946 Copenhagen, no. 43; 1946-47 Liège, Brussels & Mons, no. 75; 1947 Paris, no. 77; 1947 Geneva, no. 77; 1947 Groningen, no. 43; 1947-48 London, Birmingham & Glasgow, no. 31; 1948 Bergen & Oslo, no. 22; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 106; 1949-50 New York & Chicago, no. 61; 1950 Hilversum, no. 14; 1951 Lyon & Grenoble, no. 26; 1951 Arles, no. 26; 1951-52 Nijmegen & Alkmaar, no. 10; 1952 Enschede, no. 34; 1952 Eindhoven, no. 34; 1953 The Hague, no. 96; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 65; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 64; 1954 Zürich, no. 27; 1954-55 Bern, no. 37; 1955 New York, no. 25; 1955 Antwerp, no. 208; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 113a; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 33; 1957 Breda, no. 42; 1957 Marseille, no. 36; 1957-58 Leiden & Schiedam, no. 15; 1958 Deventer, no. 13; 1958 Mons, no. 18; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 29; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 27; 1960-61 Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg & Toronto, no. 35; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 31; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 31; 1963 Amsterdam, no. 101; 1963 Humlebæk, no. 22; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 22; 1965 Charleroi & Ghent, no. 12; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 27; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 38; 1968-69 London, no. 99; 1969-70 Los Angeles, Saint Louis & Philadelphia, no. 24; 1970-71 Baltimore, San Francisco & New York, no. 24; 1971-72 Paris, no. 54; 1972 Bordeaux, no. 16; 1972-73 Strasbourg & Bern, no. 17; 1988 Paris, no. 68; 1990 Amsterdam, no. 34; 1990-91 Essen & Amsterdam, no. 14 [only Amsterdam]; 1994 Amsterdam, no cat.; 1995 Hamburg, unnumbered; 1998-99 Washington & Los Angeles, no. 39; 2001-02 Chicago & Amsterdam, no. 54; 2003 Amsterdam I, no. 73; 2005 Tokyo, Osaka & Nagoya, no. 59; 2006-07 Amsterdam & New York, unnumbered; 2010 London, no. 68.

Tables summarising the results of technical examinations and scientific analysis

Ella Hendriks
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Natasha Walker

The tables were compiled by Ella Hendriks, incorporating the results of technical examinations conducted by Ella Hendriks and Natasha Walker, as well as analytical results provided by Muriel Geldof and Maarten van Bommel from the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE) in Tables 2, 3, 5 and 7.

Table 1
Paint-sellers visited in Paris

Information on companies was compiled in collaboration with Stéphanie Constantin in Paris on the basis of the March 1886-February 1888 Paris editions of Didot-Bottin, *Annuaire-Almanach du Commerce, de l'Industrie, de la Magistrature et de l'Administration*, in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Colourman stamps on pictures in the collection of the Kröller-Müller Museum inventoried by Luuk Struick van der Loeff and her colleague conservators are listed in Otterlo 2003. Information on F 382 was provided by Kristin Hoermann-Lister, paintings conservator at The Art Institute of Chicago. Concerning the Rey et Perrod stamp on *The Moulin Le Blute-fin* (Museum de Fundatie, Heino and Zwolle), see Van Tilborgh/Hendriks 2010, esp. pp. 401, 402.

Company name	Retail address in the period 1886-88	Dates of company	Listing	Object	Trade stamps/labels
Dubus	60 boulevard Malesherbes	1877-98	Specially for painting and drawing	*Vase with lilacs, daisies and anemones* (F 322 JH 1292)	Stamp on reverse of canvas
A. Fermine	37 rue Notre-Dame-de-Lorette	1876-1911	Easel-maker: mannequins, easels, maquettes	*Portrait of Agostina Segatori* (cat. 83)	Stamp on reverse of canvas
Hardy-Alan	36 rue du Cherche-Midi	1868-1920	Colours: painting dealer (from 1877): canvases (from 1884): easels (from 1894): painting and print restorer (from 1906)	*Still life with cornflowers, daisies, poppies and white carnations* (F 324 JH 1293)	Stamp on reverse of canvas when still on its original strainer, recorded in a photograph made before the painting was lined
Gust. Hennequin	11 avenue de Clichy	1874-1903	Colours, canvas and brushes	*Self-portrait* (F 380 JH 1225)	Stamp on reverse of *carton* support
				Basket of apples (F 378 JH 1340)	Stamp on reverse of canvas
Louis Latouche	34 rue Lafayette	c.1870-87	Colours	*Dante's death mask* (inv. no. v3 V/1994, Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum)	Record of label formerly present on reverse
Hofer Frères (ancienne maison Vallé fondée en 1770)	3 Grands-Augustins	1770-1890	Colours: painting canvases: photographic accessories: painting dealer, expert and restorer (1888)	*Sunset in Montmartre* (cat. 91)	Stamp on reverse visible through lining canvas
				The Moulin Le Blute-fin (F 273 JH 1116)	Stamp on reverse of canvas

Company name	Retail address in the period 1886-88	Dates of company	Listing	Object	Trade stamps/labels
Rey et Perrod[1]	51 rue de la Rochefaucauld (also shop at 64 rue Notre-Dame-de-Lorette)	1868-1905	Fine colours	*Portrait of a woman* (cat. 54)	Stamp on reverse of canvas still mounted on its original strainer
				The Moulin Le Blute-fin (Heino and Zwolle, Museum de Fundatie)	Stamp on reverse of canvas still mounted on its original stretcher
Pignel-Dupont	17 rue Lepic	1883-95	Colours and wallpapers	*Plaster cast studies* (cats. 57-59, 61-62 and 63) *View from Vincent's studio* (cat. 56) *Small bottle with peonies and blue delphiniums* (cat. 68)	Labels on the reverse of *carton* supports
J.-F. ('père') Tanguy	14 rue Clauzel	1874-94	Fine colours		No stamps or labels known
Tasset et L'Hôte[2]	31 rue Fontaine-Saint-Georges	1885-1910	Colours	*Earthenware bowl with potatoes* (F 118 JH 932)	Stamp on reverse of the original canvas transcribed onto the lining canvas
				Grapes, lemons, pears and apples (F 382 JH 1337)	Stamp on reverse of canvas
				Four sunflowers gone to seed (F 452 H 1330)	Stamp on the original stretcher
				Courtesan: after Eisen (cat. 133)	Stamp on the original stretcher

1 Though listed as Rey et Perrod in the trade almanac, the company's name is spelled Rey et Perrot on the canvas stamps observed.
2 Although the earliest listing of Tasset et L'Hôte in the trade almanac occurs in 1887, cadastral records confirm that, in fact, the company existed from July 1885 onwards. See Reff 1998, p. 76. This earlier origin of the company is consistent with the fact that their trade stamp is recorded on the back of the canvas used for *Earthenware bowl with potatoes* (F 118 JH 932), a painting dated to late 1886.

Table 2
Carton supports

Unprimed

Figure/portrait 4 (33 x 24 cm)

Cat. no.	F no.	JH no.	Title	Date	Trade sticker or stamp
85	216i	1072	*Plaster cast of a woman's torso*	February-March 1887	–

Primed

Ground type 1 (looks pale grey): lead white, barytes, gypsum and/or calcium carbonate white, carbon black, different shades of ochre, traces of clay and, occasionally, artificial French ultramarine. Smooth surface texture.

Ground type 2 (looks white): lead white, calcium carbonate white, occasional inclusion of menilite. Smooth or granular surface texture.

Ground type 3: (looks warm buff colour): 1st layer is lead white, 2nd layer resembles ground type 1 but with more barytes and no, or almost no black pigment. The top layer is rolled on to provide a granular texture.

Figure 0 (19 x 14 cm)

Cat. no.	F no.	JH no.	Title	Date	Trade sticker or stamp
97	267	1224	*Self-portrait*	March-June 1887	–
121	294	1209	*Portrait of Theo van Gogh*	Summer 1887	–
122	296	1210	*Self-portrait*	Summer 1887	–

Figure 1 (22 x 16 cm)

Cat. no.	F. no.	JH no.	Title	Date	Trade sticker or stamp
55	232	1113	*Path in Montmartre*	late April-early May 1886	–

Figure 5 (35 x 27 cm)

Cat. no.	F no.	JH no.	Title	Date	Trade sticker or stamp
60	216d	1071	*Torso of Venus*	mid-June 1886	–
61	216e	1078	*Male torso*	mid-June 1886	Pignel-Dupont
62	216f	1076	*Kneeling écorché*	mid-June 1886	Pignel-Dupont
63	216j	1059	*Torso of Venus*	mid-June 1886	Pignel-Dupont
68	243a	1106	*Small bottle with peonies and blue delphiniums*	late June-mid-July 1886	Pignel-Dupont
69	218	1144	*Glass with yellow roses* (on top of plaster cast of Michelangelo's *Young slave*)	late June-mid-July 1886	–

Figure 6 (41 x 33 cm)

Cat. no.	F no.	JH no.	Title	Date	Trade sticker or stamp
56	231	1099	*View from Vincent's studio*	early June 1886	Pignel-Dupont
59	216c	1082	*Horse*	mid-June 1886	Pignel-Dupont
78	331	1235	*Shoes*	January-February 1887	–
98	356	1248	*Self-portrait*	March-June 1887	–
125	469	1310	*Self-portrait with straw hat*	August-September 1887	–

Figure 8 (46 x 38 cm)

Cat. no.	F no.	JH no.	Title	Date	Trade sticker or stamp
57	216a	1054	*Torso of Venus*	mid-June 1886	Pignel-Dupont
58	216b	1060	*Torso of Venus*	mid-June 1886	Pignel-Dupont

Table 3
Primed canvas supports

The first column contains the numbers cross-referenced in the catalogue entries.

Date

The date is that of the current image, marked in **red** when it overlies an abandoned composition.

Height x width (cm)

Height by width dimensions are listed for each picture in cm. These canvas dimensions are compared to the ranges of commercial sizes offered by **Lefranc & Cie** in 1889 (fig. 2), as well as by **Bourgeois Aîné** in 1888. Compared to Bourgeois Aîné, Lefranc & Cie advertised a slightly extended range that included both *haute* (vertical) and *basse paysage* (horizontal landscape) and *marine* canvases for size numbers 5-30. The designation *portrait* (used by Lefranc) is interchangeable with *figure* (used by Bourgeois). We have opted for the term *figure* in the remainder of the catalogue. The closest match or matches are given for each of Van Gogh's canvases.

Marginal variations in the standard formats supplied by different manufacturers in the period might lead us to expect small deviations in the measurements of pictures. Furthermore, we need to allow for slight alterations in original picture format as a result of later treatments, such as lining and/or replacing stretching frames. Taking this margin of error into account, the following criteria were used to decide whether a canvas was of standard format, close to standard format, or of non-standard format.

Standard format: the height and width measurements deviate less than 1 cm from the given standard format.

Close to standard format: the height or width measurements deviate 1-2.5 cm from the closest standard format.

Non-standard format: the height or width measurements deviate 2.5 cm or more from the closest standard format. Non-standard formats might be composed of interchangeable or 'universal' stretcher bars of fixed length, as noted where appropriate.

Original features

Any surviving woven edges of the canvas (so-called selvedges) are recorded, as well as original stretching, stretching frames and format stamps. Such features provide important evidence for the original format of a picture support.

Priming method

A distinction is made between canvas supports that were cut from a larger pre-primed piece (primed then cut), as opposed to canvas supports that were cut to size

before individual priming on the working frame (cut then primed). In the former case the priming layers cover the entire canvas, including the tacking margins, whereas in the latter case they cover the picture area only.

Priming layers

For each picture, the build-up and composition of priming layers was investigated using paint sample cross-sections. In the table, the ground layers are grouped accordingly under a few main types. It should be noted that the small amounts of aluminium silicates identified in these ground layers may be part of the natural ochres present, rather than separate additions. As regards terminology, we have adhered to the general term calcium carbonate except in cats. 110, 131 and 132 where it was specifically identified as chalk by the presence of fossil coccoliths evident in the back-scattered electron images of paint cross-sections. Similarly, the term barium sulphate is used except where the coarse particle size and/or the presence of strontiobarytes confirms this to be present in the natural form of barytes pigment (as opposed to the synthetic variety known as *blanc fixe*). The methods and techniques used to prepare and analyse samples are described in 'Van Gogh's working practice: a technical study', note 2.

Thread count

The average thread counts for each picture support are listed with the highest value first (vertical or horizontal direction). The warp and weft directions are specified only in the very few instances where an original selvedge of the cloth remains, but usually this is unknown.

Due to the uniform quality of machine-woven canvases used by 19th-century painters, even very slight variations in thread count may be significant to distinguish different batches of canvas produced. We have made use of internationally agreed standards in order to quantify these thread counts in an accurate and replicable way. The procedure for collecting and analysing data was as follows. Using X-radiographs, threads were counted over a distance of 2 cm in each direction. This was repeated, usually 5 times, in different areas of the canvas. For each group of counts, an average value was calculated and halved to provide the mean thread count per cm. The confidence interval (CI) is given between brackets. For a definition of CI see International Standard ISO 2602. In this case the CI gives the range of values that have a 95% probability of containing the true value of the mean thread count being investigated. No CI was given for cat. 124 (on fine cotton) and cats. 135-37 (on twill) since multiple thread counts could not be made.

Fibre analysis

Selective analysis of fibre samples from 22 paintings was carried out using Polarised Light Microscopy (PLM). Morphological characteristics were used to distinguish cotton from bast fibres like flax, from which linen is made.

Matches

Each picture support is categorised according to its ground type. The pictures are listed in order of increasing thread count within each group of supports with the

same type of ground. This helps to match up pictures that were painted on identical supports, in terms of canvas weave and/or priming layers applied. To designate a weave match between canvases, features other than thread count alone were also considered. For example, a similar pattern of weave faults and comparable thickness of threads seen in the X-ray (actually the impressions of the canvas threads apparent in X-ray absorbent ground or paint layers) were also deemed necessary. The process of matching canvases by visual comparison of their weave patterns evident in X-rays was a manual one. However, at a late stage of this research, new computer tools were developed to perform this task. Though it was not possible to present all the new data resulting from the automated techniques in this publication, some advanced findings are discussed in the entries on cats. 45, 99 and 100. The pictures painted on the backs of Nuenen canvases have not been included in this column, since reconstructing the rolls of canvas that Van Gogh used in his Dutch period is beyond the scope of this study.

3.1 Unidentified ground (simple, tabby-weave canvas)

	Cat. no.	F no.	JH no.	Title	Date In red if underlying composition	Height x width (cm) Equivalent commercial size? Lefranc & Cie 1889 Bourgeois Aîné 888	Original features	Canvas primed then cut	Canvas cut then primed	Ground	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Fibre identified	Matches
1	102	244	1093	*Basket of pansies*	First half of May 1887	46.0 x 55.0 *Portrait 10* (55 x 46)			■	No sample including the first ground available (most likely scraped down with the underlying composition)	**12.4** (±1.0)	**11.7** (±0.7)		

3.2 Chalk grounds (simple, tabby-weave canvases)

	Cat. no.	F no.	JH no.	Title	Date In red if underlying composition	Height x width (cm) Equivalent commercial size? Lefranc & Cie 1889 Bourgeois Aîné 1888	Original features	Canvas primed then cut	Canvas cut then primed	Ground 1 layer	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Fibre identified	Matches
2	132	372	1297	*Bridge in the rain: after Hiroshige*	October-November 1887	73.3 x 53.8 *Basse paysage 20* (75 x 54) *Paysage 20* (73 x 54)		■ probably		No size evident. Calcium carbonate white and bone black applied in a very thin and uneven layer. The picture area has been oiled out with a layer of medium, causing the light grey ground to darken	**19.1** (±1.0)	**19.0** (±0.9)	Bast fibre, probably linen	Canvas (but not ground) matches cat. 131
3	131	371	1296	*Flowering plum orchard: after Hiroshige*	October-November 1887	55.6 x 46.8 *Portrait 10* (55 x 46)			■	No size evident. Very thin layer of calcium carbonate white. Surface examination suggests possible local application of second whiter ground under parts of painted orange border	**20.1** (±0.5)	**17.1** (±1.3)	Bast fibre, probably linen	Canvas (but not ground) matches cat. 132

3.3 Lead white on thin, calcium carbonate white grounds (simple, tabby-weave canvases)

	Cat. no.	F no.	JH no.	Title	Date In red if underlying composition	Height x width (cm) Equivalent commercial size? Lefranc & Cie 1889 Bourgeois Aîné 1888	Original features	Canvas primed then cut	Canvas cut then primed	Ground Layer 1	Ground Layer 2	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Fibre identified	Matches
4	47	207a	1204	*Portrait of a prostitute*	Mid-December 1885	46.2 x 38.4 *Portrait* 8 (46 x 38)	Right selvedge		■	Calcium carbonate white	Lead white and little umber	**11.8** (±0.7) Warp	**11.8** (±0.7) Weft		
5	86	216g	1055	*Plaster cast of a woman's torso*	February-March 1887	40.8 x 27.1 *Basse paysage* 6 (40.5 x 27) *Paysage* 6 (41 x 27)	Original format stamp (6) visible through lining canvas		■	Incomplete, very thin layer of calcium carbonate white in glue	Lead white, little barium sulphate, silicates, calcium carbonate white, bone black, umber and yellow ochre	**12.1** (±0.5)	**12.0** (±0.1)	Bast fibre, probably linen	
6	109	309	1315	*Path in the woods*	Mid-May-mid-July 1887	45.3 x 37.7 *Portrait* 8 (46 x 38)			■	Calcium carbonate white	Lead white and little silicates	**12.2** (±0.5)	**12.1** (±0.6)		
7	64	229	1176	*The hill of Montmartre with stone quarry*	June-mid-July 1886	32.0 x 40.9 *Portrait* 6 (40.5 x 32.5) *Figure* 6 (41 x 33)	Bottom selvedge		■	Medium rich layer with calcium carbonate white	Lead white, little barium sulphate, calcium carbonate white/gypsum, carbon black and few ochreous particles	**12.4** (±0.6) Weft	**11.8** (±0.7) Warp	Bast fibre, probably linen	
8	110	310	1274	*Wheatfield with partridge*	Mid-June-mid-July 1887	53.7 x 65.2 *Portrait* 15 (65 x 54)			■	Calcium carbonate white (chalk)	Lead white, little carbon black, umber and ochreous particles. Layer 2 may consist of two applications	**13.0** (±1.3)	**12.4** (±0.9)	Bast fibre, probably linen	

	Cat. no.	F no.	JH no.	Title	Date In red if underlying composition	Height x width (cm) **Equivalent commercial size?** **Lefranc & Cie 1889** **Bourgeois Aîné 1888**	Original features	Canvas primed then cut	Canvas cut then primed	Ground Layer 1	Ground Layer 2	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Fibre identified	Matches
9	65	230	1177	*The hill of Montmartre with stone quarry*	June-mid-July 1886	56.0-56.3 x 62.2 **Non-standard** Closest to *portrait* 15 (65 x 54). Possible use of 56.7 cm stretcher bar for the height and 62.1 cm stretcher bar for the width (as in *paysage* and *marine* sizes 20-30)		■		Calcium carbonate white	Lead white, little barium sulphate and few black particles	**13.1** (±1.0)	**12.0** (±0.1)	Bast fibre, probably linen	
10	123	28	1191	*Kingfisher by the waterside*	July-August 1887	26.5 x 19.0 *Haute paysage* 3 (27 x 19)	Painted red border on the tacking margins	■		Calcium carbonate white	Lead white, little barium sulphate, gypsum, red and orange ochre and carbon black	**13.2** (±1.1)	**12.6** (±0.5)		
11	92	347	1241	*Impasse des Deux Frères*	Late February-mid-April 1887	35.0 x 65.3 **Non-standard.** Closest is *basse marine* 15 (65 x 40.5). Possible use of fixed stretcher bar sizes 5 (35 cm) and 15 (65 cm)		■		Calcium carbonate white	Lead white, little barium sulphate, gypsum, silicates, carbon black and ochreous particles	**13.2** (±0.5)	**12.9** (±0.8)		
12	52	208	1195	*Self-portrait*	March-June 1886	27.2 x 19.0 *Haute paysage* 3 (27 x 19)	Original strainer with format stamp (3)	■		Calcium carbonate white, little lead white, bone black and silicates	Lead white, little barium sulphate, red ochre, silicates and calcium carbonate white	**14.6** (±1.1)	**12.9** (±1.0)		

13	104	314	1258	*Garden with courting couples: Square Saint-Pierre*	Mid- to late May 1887	75.0 x 112.7 **Non-standard.** Closest to *haute marine* 50 (116 x 73). Possible use of 113.4 cm stretcher bar for the width, as in *portrait* and *haute paysage* sizes 80-120		■		Calcium carbonate white	Zinc white, little barium sulphate, calcium carbonate white, aluminium silicates and orange ochre particles	**16.9** (±0.6)	**15.1** (±0.7)	Bast fibre, probably linen	
14	111	307	1318	*Trees*	Second half of July 1887	46.1-46.5 x 38.0 *Portrait 8* (46 x 38)	Underlying composition extends over the bottom and right tacking margins	■		Calcium carbonate white	Lead white, many black particles, little gypsum, aluminium silicates, ochre, umber and barium sulphate. Applied in two stages	**30.2** (±1.1)	**25.6** (±1.6)	Bast fibre, probably linen	Canvas weave matches canvas used for cat. 112, a landscape by another artist that was recycled by Van Gogh

3.4 Lead white and calcium carbonate white on thicker, calcium carbonate white and lead white grounds (simple, tabby weave canvases)

Cat. no.	F no.	JH no.	Title	Date In red if underlying composition	Height x width (cm) Equivalent commercial size? Lefranc & Cie 1889 Bourgeois Aîné 1888	Original features	Canvas primed then cut	Canvas cut then primed	Ground Layer 1	Ground Layer 2	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Fibre identified	Matches
15 134	358	1612	*Piles of French novels*	October-November 1887	54.0-54.2 x 73.4 *Basse paysage 20* (73 x 54)		■		Calcium carbonate white and little lead white	Lead white and little calcium carbonate white	**14.5** (±0.9)	**13.6** (±0.6)		

	Cat. no.	F no.	JH no.	Title	Date In red if underlying composition	Height x width (cm) Equivalent commercial size? Lefranc & Cie 1889 Bourgeois Aîné 1888	Original features	Canvas primed then cut	Canvas cut then primed	Ground Layer 1	Ground Layer 2	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Fibre identified	Matches
16	46	174	978	*Portrait of an old woman*	Mid- to late-December 1885	50.5 x 39.7-40.0 **Non-standard**. Closest is *portrait* 10 (55 x 46) or *portrait* 8 (46 x 38). Probable use of non-standard stretcher manufactured by carpenter in Nuenen and sent on to Antwerp. Equivalent proportions could be achieved using a 50 cm stretcher bar (as in *portrait* 12) for the height, and fixed stretcher bar size 6 (40.5 cm) for the width		■		Calcium carbonate white and little lead white	Lead white, little calcium carbonate white and zinc white	**14.8** (±1.9)	**14.0** (±0.1)	Bast fibre, probably linen	
17	50	212	999	*Head of a skeleton with a burning cigarette*	Between 18 January and the beginning of February	32.2 x 24.6 *Portrait* 4 (32.5 x 24.5) *Figure* 4 (33 x 24)		■		Calcium carbonate white and little lead white	Lead white and little calcium carbonate white	**14.8** (±0.9)	**14.0** (±0.1)		
18	108	304	1326	*The bridge at Courbevoie*	Mid-May-late July 1887	32.0 x 40.0 Portrait 6 (40.5 x 32.5) *Figure* 6 (41 x 33)		■		Calcium carbonate white and little lead white	Lead white and little calcium carbonate white	**15.1** (±0.6)	**13.5** (±0.1)		

19	45	205	971	*Portrait of an old man*	7 or 8 December 1885	44.2 x 33.8 Close to *basse paysage* 8 (46 x 32.5) or *paysage* 8 (46 x 33). Probable use of non-standard stretcher manufactured by carpenter in Nuenen and sent on to Antwerp. Equivalent proportions could be achieved using a 43.2 cm stretcher bar (as in *paysage* and *marine* sizes 10-15) for the height, and fixed stretcher bar size 4 (32.5 cm or 33 cm) for the width		■		Calcium carbonate white, little lead white and brown ochre. Oil medium	Lead white. Oil medium	**16.1** (±0.8)	**13.8** (±0.7)		Canvas and ground match cat. 49. Cut in weft alignment from the same pre-primed canvas sent on to Antwerp from Nuenen
20	49	260	970	*Houses seen from the back*	Between 9 December 1885 and the end of February 1886	43.7 x 33.3 Close to *basse paysage* 8 (46 x 32.5) or *paysage* 8 (46 x 33). Probable use of non-standard stretcher manufactured by carpenter in Nuenen and sent on to Antwerp. Equivalent proportions could be achieved using a 43.2 cm stretcher bar (as in *paysage* and *marine* sizes 10-15) for the height, and fixed stretcher bar size 4 (32.5 cm or 33 cm) for the width		■		Calcium carbonate white, little lead white and brown ochre	Lead white	**16.0** (±0.6)	**13.5** (±0.6)	Bast fibre, probably linen	Canvas and ground match cat. 45. Cut in weft alignment from the same pre-primed canvas sent on to Antwerp from Nuenen
21	101	275	1278	*Square Saint-Pierre at sunset*	First half of May 1887	32.8 x 42.0 *Portrait* 6 (40.5 x 32.5) *Figure* 6 (41 x 33)	Original support had no tacking margins	?	?	Calcium carbonate white and little lead white	Lead white and little calcium carbonate white	**16.7** (±1.1)	**15.9** (±1.1)		Canvas and ground match cats. 99 and 129. Cut in weft alignment from the same pre-primed canvas as cat. 99

	Cat. no.	F no.	JH no.	Title	Date In red if underlying composition	Height x width (cm) Equivalent commercial size? Lefranc & Cie 1889 Bourgeois Aîné 1888	Original features	Canvas primed then cut	Canvas cut then primed	Ground Layer 1	Ground Layer 2	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Fibre identified	Matches
22	129	524	1565	*Self-portrait with pipe and straw hat*	September-October 1887	41.9 x 30.0 *Haute paysage* 6 (40.5 x 29.7)	Original support had no tacking margins	?	?	Calcium carbonate white and little lead white	Lead white, little calcium carbonate white and zinc white (?)	**17.0** (±0.1)	**16.4** (±0.5)		Canvas and ground match cats. 99 and 101
23	100	297	1346	*Skull*	First half of May 1887	41.6-42.4 x 30.0-30.4 *Haute paysage* 6 (40.5 x 29.7)	Original support had no tacking margins	?	?	Calcium carbonate white and little lead white	Lead white, little calcium carbonate white and zinc white	**17.2** (±1.1)	**13.5?** Obscured by horizontal stripes of marouflage adhesive in the X-ray	Bast fibre, probably linen	Ground (but not canvas) matches cats. 99, 101, and 129
24	99	297a	1347	*Skull*	First half of May 1887	40.4-40.7 x 30.3-30.5 *Haute paysage* 6 (40.5 x 29.7)	Original support had no tacking margins	?	?	Calcium carbonate white and little lead white	Lead white, little calcium carbonate white and zinc white	**17.0?** (±0.9) Obscured by vertical stripes of marouflage adhesive in the X-ray	**16.1** (±0.6)		Canvas and ground match cats. 101 and 129. Cut in weft alignment from the same pre-primed canvas as cat. 101

3.5 Lead white grounds (simple, tabby-weave canvases)

	Cat. no.	F no.	JH no.	Title	Date In red if underlying composition	Height x width (cm) Equivalent commercial size? Lefranc & Cie 1889 Bourgeois Aîné 1888	Original features	Canvas primed then cut	Canvas cut then primed	Ground	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Fibre identified	Matches
25	127	603	1336	*Grapes*	September-October 1887	33.0 x 46.3 *Basse paysage* 8 (46 x 32.5) *Paysage* 8 (46 x 33)		■		Lead white, calcium carbonate white, little orange ochre and carbon black. Ground may consist of two layers, with less calcium carbonate white in the top layer	**11.9** (±1.1)	**11.8** (±0.5)		

26	96	369	1206	*Portrait of Léonie Rose Charbuy-Davy*	March-April 1887	60.7 x 45.7 *Haute paysage* 12 (61 x 45.9) *Paysage* 12 (60 x 46)		■		Lead white, few particles of bone black, umber and presumably other earth pigments. Applied in two stages	**12.0** (±1.4)	**11.6** (±0.6)	
27	89	340	1239	*Carafe and dish with citrus fruit*	February-March 1887	46.3 x 38.3 *Portrait* 8 (46 x 38)		■		Lead white, calcium carbonate white and little . silicates	**12.1** (±0.6)	**11.4** (±0.6)	
28	66	261	1101	*View of Paris*	June-July 1886	53.9 x 72.8 *Basse paysage* 20 (73 x 54)	Right selvedge		■	Lead white, zinc white and few black and ochreous particles	**12.1** (±0.6) Warp	**12.1** (±1.6) Weft	Bast fibre, probably linen
29	115	316	1246	*Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette*	Late July 1887	81.0 x 100.0 *Portrait* 40 (100 x 81)			■	Orange ochre particles under the ground. Lead white and little aluminium silicate	**12.1** (±0.6)	**12.1** (±0.7)	
30	70	248a	1148	*Vase with gladioli and Chinese asters*	August-mid-September 1886	46.5 x 38.4 *Portrait* 8 (46 x 38)		■		Lead white, little barium sulphate, umber, orange ochre and black	**12.5** (±0.7)	**11.3** (±0.1)	
31	94	292	1219	*Boulevard de Clichy*	March-mid-April 1887	46.0 x 55.3-55.5 *Portrait* 10 (55 x 46)			■	Lead white, little barium sulphate, calcium carbonate white and very little fine orange and black pigment	**12.5** (±0.1)	**12.0** (±0.5)	
32	79	334	1228	*Basket of crocus bulbs*	January-February 1887	32.5 x 41.2 *Portrait* 6 (40.5 x 32.5) *Figure* 6 (41 x 33)		■		Two size layers. Lead white, little umber, aluminium silicates and few ochreous particles	**12.6** (±0.6)	**12.1** (±0.6)	Bast fibre, probably linen
33	51	215	1045	*Nude girl, seated*	April-early June 1886	27.1 x 23.5 *Portrait* 3 (27 x 21.5) *Figure* 3 (27 x 22)		■		Lead white, little barium sulphate, silicates, carbon black and few ochreous particles. Oil medium	**12.8** (±0.7)	**11.7** (±0.7)	
34	74	181	1090	*Self-portrait as a painter*	September-November 1886	46.4 x 38.3 *Portrait* 8 (46 x 38)		■		Lead white and calcium . carbonate white	**11.8** (±0.7)	**12.8** (±0.6)	
35	73	255	1124	*Shoes*	September-November 1886	38.1 x 45.3 *Portrait* 8 (46 x 38)			■	Yellow-orange iron oxide particles under the ground (no size present in sample). Ground contains lead white, little bone black, gypsum, very few orange particles and one barium sulphate particle	**12.8** (±1.1)	**12.1** (±0.1)	Bast fibre, probably linen

	Cat. no.	F no.	JH no.	Title	Date In red if underlying composition	Height x width (cm) Equivalent commercial size? Lefranc & Cie 1889 Bourgeois Aîné 1888	Original features	Canvas primed then cut	Canvas cut then primed	Ground	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Fibre identified	Matches
36	93	346	1244	*Montmartre: windmills and allotments*	March-mid April 1887	45.2 x 81.3 **Non-standard**. Closest is *basse marine* 25 (81 x 54). Possible use of fixed stretcher bar sizes 8 (46 cm) and 25 (81 cm) for the height and width respectively		■		Lead white, little gypsum, ochre and silicates	**12.8** (±1.1)	**12.4** (±0.5)		
37	95	341	1242	*View from Theo's apartment*	Late March-mid-April 1887	45.9 x 38.1 *Portrait* 8 (46 x 38)	Original format stamp (8), twice on stretcher	■		Lead white, little orange ochre, aluminium silicates	**12.9** (±0.6)	**12.0** (±0.6)		
38	113	308	1313	*Undergrowth*	Second half of July 1887	46.0 x 38.0 *Portrait* 8 (46 x 38)			■	Size with orange ochre particles. Lead white with very little bone black and orange, presumably ochre pigment. Very thinly applied	**12.9** (±1.0)	**12.1** (±0)		
39	91	266a	1223	*Sunset in Montmartre*	Late February-early March 1887	21.5 x 46.4 **Non-standard** Closest is *basse marine* 8 (46 x 27). *Portrait* 10 (55 x 46) canvas has been cut across the middle	Original format stamp (10) visible through lining. First composition continues onto bottom tacking margin	■		Lead white, little calcium carbonate white and few orange particles	**13.1** (±0.6)	**11.9** (±0.6)	Bast fibre, probably linen	
40	75	180	1194	*Self-portrait with pipe*	September-November 1886	46.0 x 38.0 *Portrait* 8 (46 x 38)			■	Lead white and calcium carbonate white	**13.1** (±0.6)	**12.1** (±1.5)		

41	76	208a	1089	*Self-portrait with felt hat*	December 1886-January 1887	41.5 x 32.4 *Portrait* 6 (40.5 x 32.5) *Figure* 6 (41 x 33)			■	Lead white, little barium sulphate, few black and ochreous particles. Oil medium. Possibly a thin calcium carbonate white (ground?) layer on top	**13.2** (±0.7)	**11.8** (±0.7)	
42	71	234	1168	*Vase with Chinese asters and gladioli*	August-mid-September 1886	61.1 x 46.1 *Haute paysage* 12 (61 x 45.9) *Paysage* 12 (60 x 46)		■		Lead white, little orange ochre, umber and aluminium silicates	**13.2** (±1.3)	**12.4** (±0.6)	
43	72	256	1169	*Prawns and mussels*	September-November 1886	26.5 x 34.8 *Portrait* 5 (35 x 28.5) *Figure* 5 (35 x 27)		■		Lead white, few particles of umber and very little gypsum and silicates. Artist-applied oiling out layer on the ground that has mixed with overlying brush strokes	**13.2** (±1.1)	**12.5** (±0.1)	
44	107	299	1254	*By the Seine*	Mid-May-late July 1887	65.3 x 49.2-49.4 *Haute paysage* 15 (65 x 48.5) *Paysage* 15 (65 x 50)			■	Lead white, very few fine orange particles and aluminium silicates	**13.2** (±0.7)	**13.1** (±0.5)	
45	105	321	1311	*Exterior of a restaurant in Asnières*	Mid-May-mid-June 1887	27.0 x 18.8 *Haute paysage* 3 (27 x 19)			■	Lead white, little orange ochre	**13.3** (±1.1)	**12.1** (±0.5)	
46	88	338	1237	*Dish with citrus fruit*	February-March 1887	21.0-21.4 x 27.1-27.4 *Portrait* 3 (27 x 21.5) *Figure* 3 (27 x 22)	Original format stamp (3) on back of canvas	■		Lead white, calcium carbonate white, little orange ochre and black	**13.4** (±1.6)	**12.2** (±0.7)	
47	48	206	972	*Head of a prostitute*	Mid- to late December 1885	35.0 x 24.4 *Basse paysage* 5 (35 x 24)		■		Lead white, little gypsum and bone black. Applied in two stages	**13.8** (±0.6)	**13.3** (±0.6)	Bast fibre, probably linen
48	67	281	1143	*Flame nettle in a flowerpot*	Late June-mid-July 1886	42.1 x 22.0 cm *Basse marine* 6 (40.5 x 21.5) *Marine* 6 (41 x 24)		■		Lead white, little umber and aluminium silicates	**14.0** (±0.7)	**12.5** (±0.1)	
49	53	215c	–	*Portrait of a woman*	March-June 1886	27.0 x 18.9 *Haute paysage* 3 (27 x 19)	Retains original mounting on strainer	■		Lead white, little barium sulphate, carbon black, ochre and silicates	**14.1** (±1.1)	**12.2** (±0.5)	

	Cat. no.	F no.	JH no.	Title	Date In red if underlying composition	Height x width (cm) Equivalent commercial size? Lefranc & Cie 1889 Bourgeois Aîné 1888	Original features	Canvas primed then cut	Canvas cut then primed	Ground	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Fibre identified	Matches
50	126	254	1342	*Apples*	September-October 1887	45.5-45.7 x 60.2-60.4 *Haute paysage* 12 (61 x 45.9) *Paysage* 12 (60 x 46)		■		Two layers. First: lead white, little barium sulphate, umber and aluminium silicates. Second: lead white	**14.4** (±0.5)	**12.9** (±0.5)		
51	103	270a	1272	*Horse chestnut tree in blossom*	Mid-May 1887	55.6 x 46.0-46.3 *Portrait* 10 (55 x 46)		■		Lead white, few particles of orange ochre and an organic reddish brown pigment	**14.6** (±1.0)	**14.0** (±0.1)		
52	77	263a	1199	*Self-portrait with glass*	January 1887	61.1 x 50.1 *Portrait* 12 (61 x 50)	Retains original mounting on stretcher	■		Lead white, barium sulphate, few particles of umber and ochre. Second layer of same composition, but without barium sulphate	**15.0** (±1.2)	**12.5** (±0.1)		
53	128	383	1339	*Quinces, lemons, pears and grapes*	September-October 1887	48.9 x 65.5 *Haute paysage* 15 (65 x 48.5) May have been purchased in *portrait* 15 format (65 x 54), since an underlying composition extends onto the bottom tacking margin.		■		Lead white, little barium sulphate, silicates, bone black and ochres. Lot of coloured pigment particles. Second layer of same composition, but without barium sulphate	**15.1** (±0.6)	**13.1** (±0.6)		
54	84	370	1208	*In the café: Agostina Segatori in Le Tambourin*	January-March 1887	55.5 x 47.0 *Portrait* 10 (55 x 46)		■		Lead white, little bone black, red and orange ochre and very little aluminium silicate	**16.6** (±0.6)	**14.0** (±0.1)		
55	83	215b	1205	*Portrait of Agostina Segatori*	January-February 1887	26.5 x 21.1 *Portrait* 3 (27 x 21.5) *Figure* 3 (27 x 22)	Original format stamp (3) on back of canvas	■		Size layer containing orange, iron oxide. Ground contains lead white, little barium sulphate, gypsum, silicates, bone black, umber and presumably orange ochre. Second ground, covering the picture area only, contains a whiter mixture of the same pigments as in layer 1	**17.3** (±0.7)	**13.0** (±0.1)		

	Cat. no.	F no.	JH no.	Title	Date In red if underlying composition	Height x width (cm) Equivalent commercial size? Lefranc & Cie 1889 Bourgeois Aîné 888	Original features	Canvas primed then cut	Canvas cut then primed	Ground	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Fibre identified	Matches
56	54	215d	–	*Portrait of a woman*	March-June 1886	32.3 x 22.0 *Haute paysage* 4 (32.5 x 21.5) *Paysage* 4 (33 x 22)	Retains original mounting on strainer	■		Lead white, little calcium carbonate white, gypsum, few particles of barium sulphate, fine orange, red and black pigment. Seems to have been applied in two layers	**17.4** (±0.5)	**14.7** (±0.7)		
57	80	337	1229	*Flowerpot with garlic chives*	January-February 1887	31.9 x 22.0 *Haute paysage* 4 (32.5 x 21.5) *Paysage* 4 (33 x 22)		■		Lead white and little gypsum	**17.4** (±0.6)	**15.0** (±0.1)		
58	90	339	1238	*Café table with absinthe*	February-March 1887	46.3 x 33.2 *Basse paysage* 8 (46 x 32.5) *Paysage* 8 (46 x 33)		■		Lead white, little calcium carbonate white and few fine orange particles	**17.7** (±0.7)	**17.0** (±0.1)		
59	106	293	1269	*Bank of the Seine*	Mid-May-late July 1887	46.0 x 32.0 *Basse paysage* 8 (46 x 32.5) *Paysage* 8 (46 x 33)			■	Lead white. Very thinly applied	**22.3** (±0.8)	**21.5** (±0.7)	Bast fibre, probably linen	
60	87	216h	1058	*Plaster cast of a woman's torso*	February-March 1887	41.0 x 32.8 *Portrait* 6 (40.5 x 32.5) *Figure* 6 (41 x 33)	Retains original mounting on stretcher	■		Lead white and little gypsum	**25.2** (±0.7)	**20.4** (±0.6)	Bast fibre, probably linen	

3.6 Painting supports cut from the same strip of (4/2 warp-faced) twill canvas prepared with a warm pinkish grey ground

	Cat. no.	F no.	JH no.	Title	Date In red if underlying composition	Height x width (cm) Equivalent commercial size? Lefranc & Cie 1889 Bourgeois Aîné 1888	Canvas primed then cut	Layer 1	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)
61	135	374	1338	*Red cabbages and onions*	October-November 1887	50.0-50.2 x 64.3 *Haute paysage* 15 (65 x 48.5) *Paysage* 15 (65 x 50)	■	Lead white, little bone black, orange ochre, umber and silicates. Two stages of application. Size with few particles of orange ochre	23 (single count)	23 (single count)
62	136	289	1203	*Portrait of Etienne-Lucien Martin*	November 1887	65.5 x 54.3 *Portrait* 15 (65 x 54)	■	Lead white, little bone black, orange ochre and silicates. Two stages of application. Size with few particles of orange ochre	23 (single count)	23 (single count)
63	137	522	1356	*Self-portrait as a painter*	December 1887-February 1888	65.0-65.1 x 50.0 *Haute paysage* 15 (65 x 48.5) *Paysage* 15 (65 x 50)	■	Lead white, little bone black, orange and red ochre. Two stages of application. Size with few particles of orange ochre	23 (single count)	23 (single count)

3.7 Paintings on verso of Nuenen canvases prepared by Van Gogh using the same pinkish brown ground colour (simple, tabby-weave canvases)

	Cat. no.	F no.	JH no.	Title	Date In red if underlying composition	Height x width (cm) Equivalent commercial size? Lefranc & Cie 1889 Bourgeois Aîné 1888	Original features	Ground	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)
64	120	77v	1304	*Self-portrait*	Mid-July-August 1887	44.5 x 33.6 Close to *basse paysage* 8 (46 x 32.5)	Original canvas had no tacking margins	No size. Single layer containing lead white, little calcium carbonate white, barium sulphate, emerald green, red ochre, organic red, zinc white (?) and vermilion	16.0 (±0.1)	13.6 (±0.6)
65	119	109v	1303	*Self-portrait*	Mid-July-August 1887	42.9 x 31.3 Close to *figure* 6 (41 x 33) *Portrait* 6 (40.5 x 32.5) *Haute paysage* 6 (40.5 x 29.7)	Original canvas had no tacking margins	No size. Single layer containing lead white, little calcium carbonate white, barium sulphate, emerald green, red ochre, organic red, zinc white (?) and carbon black	16.7 (±0.7)	13.5 (±0.1)
66	117	269v	1301	*Self-portrait*	Mid-July-August 1887	42.2 x 34.4 Close to *figure* 6 (41 x 33) *Portrait* 6 (40.5 x 32.5) *Haute paysage* 6 (40.5 x 29.7)	Original canvas had no tacking margins	No size. Single layer containing lead white, little calcium carbonate white, barium sulphate, emerald green, red ochre, organic red, zinc white (?) and vermilion	17.1 (±0.6)	13.5 (±0.1)

67	114	388v	1307	*Allotment with sunflower*	Second half of July 1887	43.2 x 36.2 Close to *portrait* 6 (40.5 x 32.5) *Portrait* 8 (46 x 38) *Haute paysage* 8 (46 x 35.1) *Figure* 6 (41 x 33)	Original canvas had no tacking margins	No size. Single layer containing lead white, barium sulphate, French ultramarine, emerald green, red and orange ochre, little organic red and zinc white (?)	**17.1** (±1.0)	**13.5** (±0.1)
68	116	179v	1300	*Self-portrait with straw hat and pipe*	Mid-July-August 1887	42.4 x 32.0 Close to *portrait* 6 (40.5 x 32.5) *Haute paysage* 6 (40.5 x 29.7) *Figure* 6 (41 x 33)	Original canvas had no tacking margins	No size. Single layer containing lead white, little calcium carbonate white, barium sulphate, emerald green, red ochre, organic red, zinc white (?) and bone black (?)	**17.1** (±0.6)	**13.6** (±0.6)
69	118	61v	1302	*Self-portrait with straw hat*	Mid-July-August 1887	41.6 x 31.4 Close to *portrait* 6 (40.5 x 32.5) *Haute paysage* 6 (40.5 x 29.7) *Figure* 6 (41 x 33)	Original canvas had no tacking margins	No size. Single layer containing lead white, little calcium carbonate white, barium sulphate, emerald green, red ochre, organic red, zinc white (?)	**17.1** (±0.6)	**13.6** (±0.6)

3.8 Barium sulphate grounds (simple, tabby-weave canvases)

	Cat. no.	F no.	JH no.	Title	Date In red if underlying composition	Height x width (cm) Equivalent commercial size? Lefranc & Cie 1889 Bourgeois Aîné 1888	Original features	Canvas cut before primed	Ground	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Fibre identified	Matches
70	112	309a	1312	*Trees and undergrowth*	Second half of July 1887	46.1 x 55.2 *Portrait* 10 (55 x 46)		■	No size evident. Barytes, lead white, calcium carbonate white and little silicates	**30.1** (±1.0)	**27.0** (±0.1)	Linen	Canvas weave matches cat. 111. The picture support was first used for a landscape by another artist that was recycled by Van Gogh
71	124	377	1328	*Sunflowers gone to seed*	Mid-August-mid-September 1887	Distorted shape. 21.2 x 27.0 *Portrait* 3 (27 x 21.5) *Figure* 3 (27 x 22)	Original canvas had no tacking margins. Selvedge remains along the top	■	No size evident. Barytes, little earth pigment and a gypsum particle. (Linseed?) oil and animal glue binding medium	**32?** Weave obscured by stripes of marouflage adhesive in the X-ray. weft	**22-24** Weave obscured by stripes of marouflage adhesive in the X-ray. warp	Cotton	Cotton canvas and ground match cats. 130 and 133
72	130	344	1353	*Self-portrait with grey felt hat*	September-October 1887	44.5 x 37.2 Close to *portrait* 8 (46 x 38)	■		Barytes and little silicates	**36.4** (±1.4)	**24.5** (±0.1)	Cotton	Cotton canvas and ground match cats. 124 and 133

	Cat. no.	F no.	JH no.	Title	Date In red if underlying composition	Height x width (cm) Equivalent commercial size? Lefranc & Cie 1889 Bourgeois Aîné 1888	Original features	Canvas cut before primed	Ground	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Average no. of threads per cm (CI)	Fibre identified	Matches
73	133	373	1298	*Courtesan: after Eisen*	October-November 1887	100.7 x 60.7 **Non-standard** Closest is *haute marine* 40 (100 x 65). Possible use of a fixed size 40 stretcher bar (100 cm) for the height, and a size 12 one (61 cm) for the width		■	Barytes and little silicates	34.8 (±0.7)	25.0 (±0.1)		Cotton canvas and ground match cats. 124 and 130

Table 4
Standard-sized canvases used for Paris pictures in the Van Gogh Museum collection

Format	Number of paintings	Used for figure/portrait	Used for landscape/city view	Used for still life
Figure/portrait				
40	1		1	
15	2	1	1	
12	1	1		
10	6	1	4	1
8	9	2	4	3
6	6	2	3	1
5	1			1
3	4	2		2
Paysage (*haute* or *basse*)				
20	3		2	1
15	4	1	1	2
12	3	1		2
8	3		1	2
6	4	2		2
4	2	1		1
3	4	2	1	1
Marine (*basse*)				
6	1			1

Table 5
Reused pictures

Cat. no.	F no.	JH no.	Title	Date of visible image	Underlying image	Date of underlying image	Identified pigments in underlying image	Scraped down?	Blocked out with dark paint?	Covered by second ground layer? (matching grounds on different paintings are indicated by the same colour)
51	215	1045	*Nude girl, seated*	April-early June 1886	Still life with flowers	After March 1886	Underlying image not sampled	No	No	No
69	218	1144	*Glass with yellow roses*	Late June-mid-July 1886	Study of plaster cast after Michelangelo's *Young slave*	Mid-June 1886	Lead white, zinc white, vermilion, Prussian blue, little yellow ochre	No	Thick dark blackish covering layer (approx. 450 μm) in the background only: contains vermilion, red ochre, Kopp's purpurin and redwood lake, methyl violet, zinc white, lead white, and Prussian blue	No
73	255	1124	*Shoes*	September-November 1886	View from Theo's apartment in the rue Laval	March-early June 1886	Zinc white, lead white, French ultramarine, cerulean blue, orange and red ochre, emerald green	No	No	No
74	181	1090	*Self-portrait as a painter*	September-November 1886	View of the *Impasse des Deux Frères*	Summer 1886 or later	Red ochre, vermilion, cadmium yellow, viridian, French ultramarine?, red lake on aluminium substrate, lead white, zinc white, barium sulphate, bone black		No	No No
75	180	1194	*Self-portrait with pipe*	September-November 1886	Bust portrait of a nude woman	March-early June 1886	Prussian blue (?), cobalt blue (?) vermilion and/or red ochre, gypsum and (charcoal?) black	Yes-roughly scraped.	No	Crudely applied, partial second white ground (approx. 15-25 μm): lead white, barytes and ochre. Raking light shows that the paint was applied with a brush approx. 1 cm wide, with gritty and viscous texture due to inclusion of coarsely ground barytes

76	208a	1089	*Self-portrait with felt hat*	December 1886-January 1887	Standing female nude	March-early June 1886	Lead white, cadmium yellow, barium sulphate and few green and blue particles.	No	No	No
77	263a	1199	*Self-portrait with glass*	January 1887	Bust portrait of a nude woman	December 1886-January 1887	Underlying image not included in samples	Yes, notably in the background	No	Possible, second light ground present in lower area of portrait where drying cracks have developed. Not sampled
80	337	1229	*Flowerpot with garlic chives*	January-February 1887	Unidentified	From March 1886	Unidentified brown, vermilion, red lake on tin substrate, apparently charcoal black, bone black, viridian, lead white and barium sulphate	Probably	No	A generally thin (approx. 10-30 μm) covering light layer is present in the areas of the background and table. Contains variable mixture of lead white, sometimes mixed with zinc white, and few coloured particles
84	370	1208	*In the café: Agostina Segatori in Le Tambourin*	January-March 1887	Bust portrait of a woman	From March 1886, Antwerp less likely	Lead white, ochre, bone black, aluminium silicates	Yes	None included in paint cross-sections. However, remnants of scraped deep black layer evident in the region of the Japanese prints on the rear wall	Pinkish grey layer of variable composition, approx. 40-50 μm: lead white, barium sulphate, emerald green, French ultramarine, and fine iron oxide red
91	266a	1223	*Sunset in Montmartre*	Late February-early March 1887	Partial lay-in for unknown subject, runs onto bottom tacking edge	After March 1886	Red ochre, bone black, vermilion	No	No	No
92	347	1241	*Impasse des Deux Frères*	Late February-mid-April 1887	Unidentified, possibly a flower still life	Summer 1886?	Red ochre, red lake on Al substrate, vermilion, chrome orange, French ultramarine, emerald green, lead white, zinc white, gypsum, bone black	Yes, at least thick ends of strokes	No	Cool whitish ground, one layer up to approx. 100 μm: lead white, zinc white, and little French ultramarine
93	346	1244	*Montmartre: windmills and allotments*	Late February-mid-April 1887	Unidentified, possibly a flower still life	Summer 1886?	Lead white, calcium carbonate white, zinc white, Naples yellow, cadmium yellow, vermilion, red ochre, unidentified red lake, presumably charcoal black, bone black, organic brown	?	No	Cool whitish ground, applied in two to three layers up to approx. 160 μm: lead white, zinc white, plus a little French ultramarine in layers 2 and 3

Cat. no.	F nr.	JH no.	Title	Date of visible image	Underlying image	Date of underlying image	Identified pigments in underlying image	Scraped down?	Blocked out with dark paint?	Covered by second ground layer? (matching grounds on different paintings are indicated by the same colour)
95	341	1242	*View from Theo's apartment*	Late March-mid-April 1887	Portrait, or possible self-portrait	March-autumn 1886	Zinc white, lead white, yellow ochre, cerulean blue, vermilion, red lake on aluminium substrate, red ochre, presumably emerald green, viridian, carbon black	Probably	Thin (up to 12 μm) and fluid blocking-out layer , which looks dark grey to black. Samples contain varied ratios of bone black, French ultramarine, little vermilion, and red lake on aluminium substrate	Cool whitish ground, one layer approx. 30 μm: lead white, zinc white, and little French ultramarine
99	297a	1347	*Skull*	First half of 1887	Study of peasant head	Nuenen (November 1884-May 1885)	Zinc white, red ochre, orange ochre, yellow ochre, umber, presumably Prussian blue, Naples yellow	No	No	Whitish ground, approx. 40 μm: lead white, barium sulphate, bone white, silicates and presumably zinc white
100	297	1346	*Skull*	First half of 1887	Study of peasant head	Nuenen (November 1884-May 1885)	Prussian blue, yellow and red ochre, silicates, zinc white, lead white, vermilion, French ultramarine, red lake on aluminium substrate, fine black	No	No	Whitish ground, approx. 35-40 μm: lead white, barium sulphate, bone white, presumably zinc white and very little charcoal black
101	275	1278	*Square Saint-Pierre at sunset*	First half of May 1887	Study of peasant head	Nuenen (November 1884-May 1885)	Different shades of ochres, umber, lead white, zinc white, Naples yellow, chrome yellow, presumably Prussian blue, bone black	No	No	Whitish ground, approx. 10-25 μm : lead white, barium sulphate, bone white, calcium carbonate white, gypsum, presumably zinc white and orange ochre
102	244	1093	*Basket of pansies*	First half of May 1887	Unidentified	After March 1886	Earth pigments, vermilion, Naples yellow, French ultramarine, presumably Prussian blue, viridian, emerald green, organic brown, zinc white, lead white, black	Yes Evident in paint cross-sections.	Thin (approx. 10-25 μm) blocking-out layer containing chiefly carbon black, with variable traces of zinc white, lead white, and coloured pigment (vermilion or emerald green)	White ground consisting of two layers (together approx. 55-90 μm). Layer 1: lead white, zinc white, littlebarium sulphate, silicates. Layer 2: lead white, little barium sulphate, bone white, carbon black and possibly zinc white

103	270a	1272	*Horse chestnut tree in blossom*	Mid-May 1887	Unidentified	After March 1886	Lead white, vermilion, organic brown, cobalt blue, yellow and red ochre	? Thin intermediate layer only visible in paint cross-sections.	No		Pinkish grey ground, approx. 30 μm: lead white, emerald green, barium sulphate, French ultramarine, fine red
104	314	1258	*Garden with courting couples: Square Saint-Pierre*	Mid- to late May 1887	Two underlying attempts. The first image is unidentified. The second image consists of a thin grid of painted black lines that extend onto the tacking margins and outline the picture area	After March 1886	First image: orange ochre, approx. 2 μm layer Second image: black and red particles, 1-2 μm layer	First image? Second image, no.	No		The light ground covering up the first attempt consists of two layers, together approx. 65 μm. Layer 1: lead white, different shades of ochre, Naples yellow, barium sulphate, aluminium silicates and presumably manganese black. Layer 2: lead white, little fine orange and black, barium sulphate and calcium carbonate white. The white ground covering the second underlying image consists of a layer approx. 60 μm thick containing: lead white, zinc white, very few fine orange, brown and black particles
111	307	1318	*Trees*	Second half of July 1887	Probably a landscape in horizontal format	After March 1886	Lead white, presumably Prussian blue, charcoal black, silicates, French ultramarine, ochre	?	No		Pinkish brown ground, one layer approx. 20 μm : emerald green, French ultramarine, orange and red ochre (the orange associated with gypsum), Kopp's purpurin lake (?). lead white, barium sulphate, possibly zinc white and carbon black
112	309a	1312	*Trees and undergrowth*	Second half of July 1887	Unidentified	After January 1887	Cobalt violet, cobalt blue, cerulean blue, French ultramarine, viridian, emerald green, vermilion, unidentified fine yellow, lead white, possibly barium sulphate and calcium carbonate white, and unidentified organic red	No	No		Pinkish brown ground, one layer approx. 15-55 μm: emerald green, French ultramarine, fine red ochre, Kopp's purpurin lake (?) orange ochre associated with gypsum, lead white, barium sulphate, and possibly zinc white
113	308	1313	*Undergrowth*	Second half of July 1887	Unidentified	After January 1887	Lead white, organic brown, red ochre, unidentified yellow, presumably French ultramarine	? Thin layer	No		Pinkish grey ground, one layer, approx. 50 μm: lead white, emerald green, barium sulphate, fine iron oxide red, French ultramarine

Cat. no.	F no.	JH no.	Title	Date of visible image	Underlying image	Date of underlying image	Identified pigments in underlying image	Scraped down?	Blocked out with dark paint?	Covered by second ground layer? (matching grounds on different paintings are indicated by the same colour)
126	254	1342	*Apples*	September-October 1887	Unidentified	After March 1886	Lead white, zinc white, cadmium yellow	? Thin layer	Streaky (approx. 10-40 μm) and translucent purplish black layer of variable hue: French ultramarine, red lake on aluminium substrate, vermilion, lead white	White ground (approx. 40 μm): lead white, zinc white, very little barium sulphate
128	383	1339	*Quinces, lemons, pears and grapes*	September-October 1887	Landscape?	After March 1886	Apparently chrome green (manufacturer's mixture of chrome yellow and Prussian blue), viridian, emerald green, Prussian blue, French ultramarine, red and orange ochre, aluminium silicates, lead white, barium sulphate	No	A flat, dark green blocking-out layer (50-75 μm) covers the lower part of the composition, running over onto the bottom tacking margin. Contains: viridian, emerald green, transparent yellow fluorescent particles that contain aluminium and sulphur, lead white, mixed with variable traces of vermilion, umber, barium sulphate, zinc white and yellow ochre. A different (approx. 10 μm) dark layer was used to cover the blue sky near the top of the composition, containing: vermilion, carbon black, brown, and silicates	No
129	524	1565	*Self-portrait with pipe and straw hat*	September-October 1887	Study of peasant head	Nuenen (November 1884-May 1885)	Lead white, zinc white, various shades of ochre, Naples yellow, chrome orange, Prussian blue	?	No	Whitish ground, one layer approx. 30-60μm : lead white, little barium sulphate, bone white, zinc white

Table 6
Pictures with underdrawing from a perspective frame

Catalogue no. and title Date	Outer dimensions of picture support	Reconstructed outer dimensions of perspective frame	Additional underdrawing detected
Cat. 92, *Impasse des Deux Frères* Late February-mid-April 1887	35.0 x 65.3 cm Non-standard	*Figure* 6 turned horizontal (approx. 33 x 41 cm)	Yes
Cat. 93, *Montmartre: windmills and allotments* March-mid-April 1887	Non-standard 45.2 x 81.4 cm	*Figure* 6 turned horizontal (approx. 33 x 41 cm)	Yes
Cat. 95, *View from Theo's apartment* Late March-mid-April 1887	*Figure* 8 (approx. 46 x 38 cm)	*Figure* 6 (approx. 41 x 33 cm)	Yes
Cat. 102, *Basket of pansies* Second half of May 1887	*Figure* 10 turned horizontal (approx. 46 x 55 cm)	*Figure* 6 turned horizontal (approx. 33 x 41 cm)	Yes
Cat. 103, *Horse chestnut tree in blossom* Mid-May 1887	*Figure* 10 (approx. 55 x 46 cm)	*Paysage* 12 turned upright (approx. 60 x 46 cm)	Yes
Cat. 105, *Exterior of a restaurant in Asnières* Mid-May-mid-June 1887	*Paysage* 3 (approx. 27 x 19 cm)	Lines relating to lower part of a perspective frame of unknown format	Yes
Cat. 107, *By the Seine* Mid-May-late July 1887	*Paysage* 15 (approx. 50 x 65 cm)	*Figure* 4 (approx. 33 x 24 cm)	Yes
Cat. 108, *The bridge at Courbevoie* Mid-May-late July 1887	*Figure* 6 turned horizontal (approx. 33 x 41 cm)	*Figure* 6 turned horizontal (approx. 33 x 41 cm)	No
Cat. 110, *Wheatfield with partridge* Mid-June-mid-July 1887	*Figure* 15 turned horizontal (approx. 54 x 65 cm)	*Paysage* 12 (approx. 46 x 60 cm)	No
Cat. 111, *Trees* Second half of 1887	*Figure* 8 (approx. 46 x 38 cm)	*Figure* 6 (approx. 41 x 33 cm)	Possible, very limited
Cat. 112, *Trees and undergrowth* Second half of 1887	*Figure* 10 (approx. 55 x 46 cm)	*Paysage* 12 turned upright (approx. 60 x 46 cm)	No
Cat. 115, *Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette* Late July 1887	*Figure* 40 turned horizontal (approx. 81 x 100 cm)	Bottom left corner of a *Paysage* 25 frame (approx. 60 x 81 cm)	Yes

Table 7
Pigments identified in visible images

(for pigments identified in underlying images and intermediate covering paint layers, see Table 5)

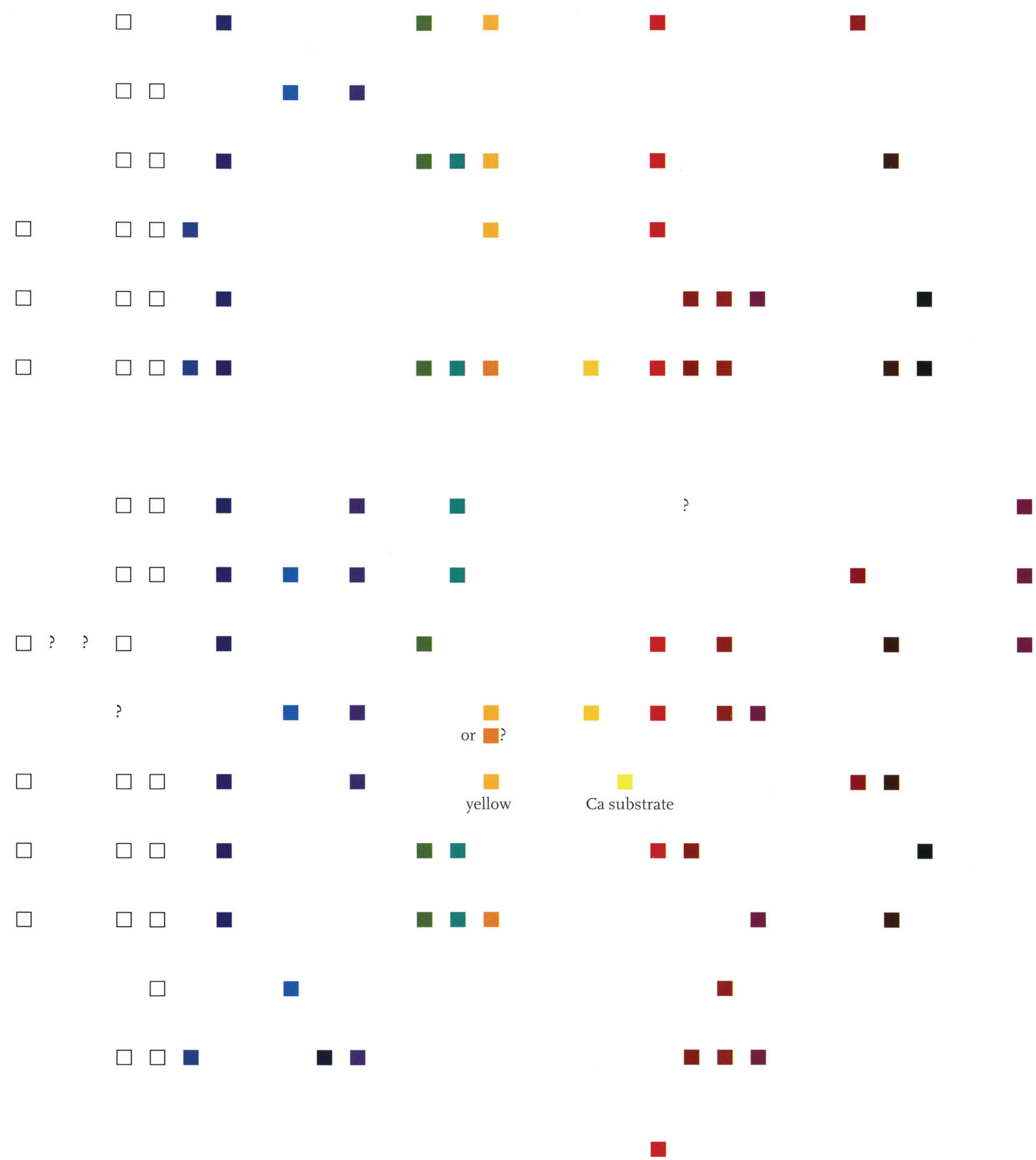
ANTWERP

Catalogue Number	Title	Date	*Barium sulphate*	*Calcium carbonate*	*Gypsum*	*Lead white*	*Zinc white*	*Cobalt*	*French ultramarine*	*Prussian blue*	*Cerulean blue*	*Indigo*	*Cobalt violet*	*Purple lake*	*Emerald green*	*Viridian*	*Chrome yellow/orange*	*Naples yellow*	*Zinc yellow*	*Cadmium yellow/orange*	*Unidentified yellow lake*	*Vermilion*	*Minium*	*Cochineal lake*	*Kopp's purpurin lake*	*Redwood lake*	*Madder lake*	*Unidentified red lake*	*Carbon black/brown*	*Bone black*	*Charcoal*	*Umber*	*Iron oxide pigments*
45	*Portrait of an old man*	7 or 8 Dec. 1885					□		■									■				■								■		■	
46	*Portrait of an old woman*	Mid- to Late Dec. 1885		□		□	□		■								■								■	■	■		■				■
47	*Portrait of a prostitute*	Mid- to Late Dec. 1885	□			□	□	■							■																		■
48	*Head of a prostitute*	Mid- to Late Dec. 1885	□			□	□	■							■	■					■							?		■			
49	*Houses seen from the back*	Between 9 Dec. 1885 and late Feb. 1886				□	□		?							■	■			■										?			
50	*Head of a skeleton with a burning cigarette*	Between 18 Jan. and early Feb. 1886		□	□		□		?									■											■	■			■

Catalogue Number	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64
Title	*Nude girl, seated*	*Self-portrait*	*Portrait of a woman*	*Portrait of a woman*	*Path in Montmartre*	*View from Vincent's studio*	*Torso of Venus*	*Torso of Venus*	*Horse*	*Torso of Venus*	*Male torso*	*Kneeling écorché*	*Torso of Venus*	*The hill of Montmartre with stone quarry*
Date	April-early June 1886	March-June 1886	March-June 1886	March-June 1886	Late April-early May 1886	Early June 1886	Mid-June 1886	Mid-June 1886	Mid-June 1886	Mid-June 1886	Mid-June 1886	Mid-June 1886	Mid-June 1886	June-mid-July 1886
Iron oxide pigments		■	■	■	■	■	■		■			■		■
Umber			■											
Charcoal														■
Bone black			■			■								■
Carbon black/brown		?		■	■	■								
Unidentified red lake				■										
Madder lake														
Redwood lake														
Kopp's purpurin lake			■											■
Cochineal lake			■											■
Minium														
Vermilion		■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■
Unidentified yellow lake														
Cadmium yellow/orange														
Zinc yellow														
Naples yellow					■	■								
Chrome yellow/orange			■			■								
Viridian		?	■	■	■	■								■
Emerald green		■		■		■			■					
Purple lake														
Cobalt violet														
Indigo														
Cerulean blue					■									
Prussian blue							■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
French ultramarine			■	■	■	■		■				■	■	?
Cobalt														
Zinc white					□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
Lead white			□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
Gypsum														
Calcium carbonate		□	□											
Barium sulphate			□	□		□								□

Catalogue Number	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78
Title	*The hill of Montmartre with a stone quarry*	*View of Paris*	*Flame nettle in a flowerpot*	*Small bottle with peonies and blue delphiniums*	*Glass with yellow roses*	*Vase with gladioli and Chinese asters*	*Vase with Chinese asters and gladioli*	*Prawns and mussels*	*Shoes*	*Self-portrait as a painter*	*Self-portrait with pipe*	*Self-portrait with felt hat*	*Self-portrait with glass*	*Shoes*
Date	June-mid-July 1886	June-July 1886	Late June-mid-July 1886	Late June-mid-July 1886	Late June-mid-July 1886	August- mid-Sept. 1886	August-mid-Sept. 1886	Sept.-Nov. 1886	Sept.-Nov. 1886	Sept.-Nov. 1886	Sept.-Nov. 1886	Dec. 1886-Jan. 1887	Jan. 1887	Jan.-Feb. 1887
Iron oxide pigments	■	■	■		■		■		■			■	■	■
Umber				■										
Charcoal		?											?	
Bone black	■							■		?		■	■	
Carbon black/brown				■	■		■			■				■
Unidentified red lake	?	■						■					■	
Madder lake														
Redwood lake				■	■									
Kopp's purpurin lake			■	■	■	■	■							
Cochineal lake						■								
Minium														
Vermilion	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■			■	
Unidentified yellow lake														
Cadmium yellow/orange	■	■				■	■	■						
Zinc yellow														
Naples yellow	X													
Chrome yellow/orange						■ and ■				■ or ■				
Viridian	■	■					■		■	■		■	■	■
Emerald green		■							■	■			■	
Purple lake					■ Methyl violet		■ unknown							
Cobalt violet														
Indigo														
Cerulean blue							■					■		
Prussian blue				■	■	?				■				
French ultramarine	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	?		■	■	
Cobalt		■	■			■	■			■				
Zinc white	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□			□	
Lead white	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□			□	
Gypsum								□	□					
Calcium carbonate														
Barium sulphate	□			□								□	□	□

No.	Title	Date
79	*Basket of crocus bulbs*	Jan.-Feb. 1887
80	*Flowerpot with garlic chives*	Jan.-Feb. 1887
81	*Basket of hyacinth bulbs*	Jan.-Feb. 1887
82	*Three novels*	Jan.-Feb. 1887
83	*Portrait of Agostina Segatori*	Jan.-Feb. 1887
84	*In the café: Agostina Segatori in Le Tambourin*	Jan.-March 1887
85	*Plaster cast of a woman's torso*	Feb.-March 1887
86	*Plaster cast of a woman's torso*	Feb.-March 1887
87	*Plaster cast of a woman's torso*	Feb.-March 1887
88	*Dish with citrus fruit*	Feb.-March 1887
89	*Carafe and dish with citrus fruit*	Feb.-March 1887
90	*Café table with absinthe*	Feb.-March 1887
91	*Sunset in Montmartre*	Late Feb.-early March 1887
92	*Impasse des Deux Frères*	Late Feb.-early April 1887
93	*Montmartre: windmills and allotments*	March-mid-April 1887
94	*Boulevard de Clichy*	March-mid-April 1887
95	*View from Theo's apartment*	Late March-mid-April 1887



Catalogue Number	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109
Iron oxide pigments								■						■
Umber				■										
Charcoal														
Bone black														
Carbon black/brown	■						■	■	■					
Unidentified red lake		■				■								■
Madder lake														
Redwood lake														
Kopp's purpurin lake	■						■		■			■		
Cochineal lake							■		■			■	■	
Minium		■	■			■			■				■	■
Vermilion	■			■		■	■	■	■			■	■	■
Unidentified yellow lake														
Cadmium yellow/orange														
Zinc yellow					■									■
Naples yellow														
Chrome yellow/orange	■				■	■		■	■		■			
Viridian	■	■	■						■					
Emerald green	■					■	■	■	■		■			■
Purple lake						■ unknown								
Cobalt violet														
Indigo														
Cerulean blue														
Prussian blue														
French ultramarine	■		■			■	■	■	■			■	■	■
Cobalt	■					■			■			■		
Zinc white	□	□	□			□	□	□	□			□		□
Lead white	□	□	□		□	□	□	□	□			□	□	□
Gypsum								□	□		□			
Calcium carbonate									□					
Barium sulphate	□	□				□	□	□	□		□	□		□
Date	March-April 1887	March-June 1887	March-June 1887	First half of May 1887	First half of May 1887	First half of May 1887	First half of May 1887	Mid-May 1887	Mid- to Late May 1887	Mid-May-mid-June 1887	Mid-May-late July 1887	Mid-May-late July 1887	Mid-May-late July 1887	Mid-May-late July 1887
Title	*Portrait of Léonie Rose Charbuy-Davy*	*Self-portrait*	*Self-portrait*	*Skull*	*Skull*	*Square Saint-Pierre at sunset*	*Basket of pansies*	*Horse chestnut tree in blossom*	*Garden with courting couples: square Saint-Pierre*	*Exterior of a restaurant in Asnières*	*Bank of the Seine*	*By the Seine*	*The bridge at Courbevoie*	*Path in the woods*

110	*Wheatfield with partridge*	Mid-June-mid-July 1887	□			□	□	■	■	■			■		■		■	■			■	■	■	
111	*Trees*	Second half of May-July 1887	□	□									■				■	■		■				
112	*Trees and undergrowth*	Second half of May-July 1887	□	□		□	□		■		■		■	■					■	■		■		
113	*Undergrowth*	Second half of July 1887	□	□	□	□	□		■	■		■ unknown	■	■	■		■	■	■					■
114	*Allotment with sunflower*	Second half of July 1887	□	□		□								■	■						■			
115	*Montmartre: behind the Moulin de la Galette*	Late July 1887	□					■	■		■				■ and ■?	■	■		■	■				
116	*Self-portrait with straw hat and pipe*	Mid-July-August 1887				□				■				■										
117	*Self-portrait*	Mid-July-August 1887	□			□			■				■	■							■			
118	*Self-portrait with straw hat*	Mid-July-August 1887																						
119	*Self-portrait*	Mid-July-August 1887					□			■			■	■			■							
120	*Self-portrait*	Mid-July-August 1887																	■	■				
121	*Portrait of Theo van Gogh*	Summer 1887	□			□	□	■	■	■				■			■				■			
122	*Self-portrait*	Summer 1887	□			□		■						■		■	■							
123	*Kingfisher by the waterside*	July-August 1887		□		?	□										■		■					
124	*Sunflowers gone to seed*	Mid-August-mid-Sept. 1887	□			□	□	■	■		■		■		■	■	■	■	■	■		■		■
125	*Self-portrait with straw hat*	August-Sept. 1887				□		■						■										
125	paint transferred from original frame		□			?									■	■								

Catalogue Number	126	127	128	128	129	130	131	132	133	134	135	136	137
Title	*Apples*	*Grapes*	*Quinces, lemons, pears and grapes*	original frame	*Self-portrait with pipe and straw hat*	*Self-portrait with grey felt hat*	*Flowering plum orchard: after Hiroshige*	*Bridge in the rain: after Hiroshige*	*Courtesan: after Eisen*	*Piles of French novels*	*Red cabbages and onions*	*Portrait of Etienne-Lucien Martin*	*Self-portrait as a painter*
Date	Sept.-Oct. 1887	Sept.-Oct. 1887	Sept.-Oct. 1887		Sept.-Oct. 1887	Sept.-Oct. 1887	Oct.-Nov. 1887	Oct.-Nov. 1887	Oct.-Nov. 1887	Oct.-Nov. 1887	Oct.-Nov. 1887	November 1887	Dec. 1887-Feb. 1888
Iron oxide pigments			■	■								■	
Umber													
Charcoal													
Bone black													
Carbon black/brown					■	■							
Unidentified red lake	■	■ Ca substrate											
Madder lake													
Redwood lake					?								
Kopp's purpurin lake		■						■				■	
Cochineal lake			■			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Minium		■	■	■			■		■		■		■
Vermilion	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■		■	■	■
Unidentified yellow lake													
Cadmium yellow/orange					■ or ■ ?						■		■
Zinc yellow		■	■	■									■
Naples yellow													
Chrome yellow/orange	■	■	■	■	■				■	■			■ and ■ ?
Viridian					■	■			■				
Emerald green	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■
Purple lake		■ unknown											
Cobalt violet													
Indigo												■	
Cerulean blue	■												
Prussian blue	■										■		
French ultramarine	■	■							■		■	■	
Cobalt		■				■			■		■		■
Zinc white	□	□	?						□			□	
Lead white	□	□	□	□	□	□		□	□		□	□	□
Gypsum	□						□		□				□
Calcium carbonate													
Barium sulphate		□	□	□	□			□					

Appendices

Appendix 1
Rejected works

These three paintings from Theo's collection (figs. 1-3) were first attributed to Van Gogh in 1928, but doubts about their authenticity surfaced after the opening of the Van Gogh Museum in 1973. The landscape (fig. 1), which was dated to the early autumn of 1886 in the 1970 edition of De la Faille's oeuvre catalogue,[1] was the first to raise suspicions. Welsh-Ovcharov said in 1976 that it might be the work of one of Van Gogh's acquaintances in Paris.[2] Hulsker did not agree,[3] but found himself in a minority of one. In 1987 the authors of the Van Gogh Museum collection catalogue relegated it to the category of 'rejected works'.[4]

Doubts were cast on the authenticity of the two still lifes by a new generation of Van Gogh scholars. Hulsker was the first to criticise De la Faille's dating of one of them to the spring of 1886 (fig. 2) and of the other to early 1887 (fig. 3).[5] He included them in his oeuvre catalogue in the group of flower still lifes from the summer of 1886 and the spring of 1887,[6] but Dorn and Feilchenfeldt then came to a very different conclusion in 1993, saying that they were 'probably simply wrongly attributed'.[7] The still lifes could have entered Theo's collection 'by way of exchange or purchase', and the following year Van Heugten underwrote their opinion of *Still life with wine, bread and cheese*.[8]

However, the rejection of these three pictures was not accepted by everyone, probably because the reasoning was not spelled out in sufficient detail. Arnold, writing in 1995, felt that the question of their authenticity needed to be examined,[9] but in 1996 Hulsker stuck to his guns and once again included them in his revised oeuvre catalogue.[10]

The hill of Montmartre

This landscape (fig. 1) shows the undeveloped part of the hill of Montmartre, with the allotments worked by the local population (cf. cats. 64, 65, 91, 115). Beyond the fence in the centre are several sheds and a grey, indeterminate building on a hillock. The view is towards the northwest. The factory with the smokestack off in the distance to the left of centre was in nearby Clichy (cf. cat. 91), and the sky is darker here, as if bad weather is on its way.

The size of the picture is almost that of a *paysage* 4 (22 x 332 cm). The canvas has a very fine weave with an average of 29.5 vertical and 28.3 horizontal threads per centimetre. The cream-coloured ground consists of lead white and calcium carbonate and is completely covered with a remarkable underpaint that was applied in two stages. The left-hand part of the sky was first given a thin, pink layer composed chiefly of lead white and vermilion. The rest of the scene was underpainted with a thicker, uniform blue layer mixed from a very finely divided type of cobalt blue, French ultramarine and possibly Prussian blue. Both underlayers were loosely painted and extend irregularly over the tacking margins. Later, when the

1 De la Faille 1970, p. 120.
2 Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 236: 'Fabian, Koning etc.'
3 Hulsker 1977, p. 259.
4 Amsterdam 1987, p. 365.
5 De la Faille 1970, pp. 128, 130.
6 Hulsker 1977, pp. 244, 272.
7 Dorn/Feilchenfeldt 1993, p. 280.
8 Van Heugten 1995, p. 85.
9 Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424: '[...] zu überprüfen'.
10 Hulsker 1996, pp. 245, 259, 272.



1
Anonymous artist
(Fabian?)
The hill of Montmartre.
Oil on canvas
22.4 x 32.9 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 76 V/1962
F 233 JH 1180

2
Anonymous artist
Still life with wine, bread and cheese
Oil on canvas
38.2 x 46.1 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 191 V/1962
F 253 JH 1121



3
Anonymous artist
Still life with bread
Oil on canvas
31.9 x 40.4 cm
Unsigned
Inv. s 192 V/1962
F 253a JH 1232



underlying paint had dried and cracked,[11] the artist prepared for a new scene by applying a uniform brown, covering layer of ultramarine and red ochre, possibly in imitation of the colour of a panel, which can be seen at various points in the present picture surface. It was only after it had dried that the landscape was painted, wet-into-wet, with a largely tonal palette consisting mainly of brown, blue and green.[12] There is an unpainted area by the right edge of the canvas, presumably where the painting was clamped to the easel. It is present in both the brown underpaint and in the paint on top, so the picture remained on the easel in the interim. The artist used fairly broad brushes, and even resorted to the palette knife for a long stroke in the left foreground.

Theo's widow, Jo van Gogh-Bonger, considered the landscape important enough to be given a place on her dining room wall (fig. 64g), but it is not known whether she thought it was by Van Gogh. She never lent it out, and it remained undescribed until 1928, when De la Faille included it in his oeuvre catalogue.[13] His view on its authenticity prevailed for a long time but is not shared by us. Its structure, colour scheme and manner have no parallels in Van Gogh's oeuvre.

As noted above, the canvas has a dense weave and is of a kind not encountered in any other work from this period. One similarity, though, is that Van Gogh painted some of his early Paris landscapes from a comparable brown mid-tone (see cats. 64, 65, 68). However, that layer was never opaque or uniform, and he also used mixtures rich in medium that allowed the light ground to show through to the surface. In other words, his underpainting was a traditional *ébauche*, unlike the one in this picture. There is also little in the way of colour contrast, which would be very unusual for Van Gogh, even in his most tonal works (see cats. 51-56, 64-66). The brushwork is also different. Although Van Gogh had a slightly rough touch, his

11 As shown by paint cross-sections.
12 A paint sample taken from the sky revealed the use of lead white and cobalt blue with the addition of vermilion, orange-ochre and coarse particles of red lead.
13 De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 69.



4 Fabian, *View of the hill of Montmartre*, c. 1886. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

brush was always descriptive. That in *The hill of Montmartre*, though, is unstructured, as if the artist did not care about what he is depicting.

The landscape bears some resemblance to a painting by an artist called Fabian (fig. 4), about whom nothing is known beyond the fact that he was a fellow student of Van Gogh's in Cormon's studio.[14] It is of almost the same subject: the hill of Montmartre with a fence in the foreground and the factories of Clichy belching smoke in the distance. The palette is a little different, but there are marked similarities in the brushwork in the sky. In both cases there are short strokes applied from the top downwards, alternating with longer horizontal ones. The build-up of the scene from a brownish underlayer is also comparable. Fabian's picture is on an unprepared panel, and it is interesting that the artist of *The hill of Montmartre* felt the need to work on the colour of such a support. However, since there is no other known work by this Fabian it is impossible to say for certain whether he is the painter of this *Hill of Montmartre* in the Van Gogh Museum.[15]

Still lifes

Like the landscape, the two still lifes (figs. 2, 3) were first published in De la Faille's oeuvre catalogue of 1928. According to him, one of them is of a plate with 'a white pudding, a bread roll and a bread roll with a piece cut off', but his white pudding is in fact a croissant.[16] The subject of the other work is a half-full bottle of wine, two glasses of wine and a plate with a hunk of baguette, a piece of cheese and a knife.

The grounds of both still lifes consist of pure lead white without any additives. The tacking margins of fig. 3 have been cut off but are intact on fig. 2. The ground does not extend over them, which means that the canvas was prepared by the artist himself or by a colourman. This is borne out by the pure and thus relatively expensive kind of lead white, which is of the *couleur fine* quality normally used for a painting and not for the ground.[17] The presence of a selvedge along the bottom of fig. 2 also points to this practice, since these were usually cut off in the process of large-scale manufacture.

The still life with the wine glasses was painted on top of a finished bust-length portrait of a woman, as can be seen in the X-radiograph (fig. 5).[18] Examination under the microscope revealed that the background of that portrait was grey and brown. The woman must have been wearing a cap or headscarf, for there is a very

14 Van Gogh got to know Fabian in Cormon's studio in the spring of 1886. The painting was probably acquired by exchange (see p. 19, note 10). There is no biographical information about Fabian. Russell, who also studied with Cormon, painted his portrait in 1887 (now Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge [Mass.]), which Van Gogh mentions in letter 598. He can also be seen in a photograph of Cormon's pupils that was probably taken around 1886-87, as we know from the identification of the sitters on an early print in the Musée Toulouse-Lautrec in Albi (Joyant 1926, pp. 58, 59, note 1; Dortu 1971, vol. 1, p. 93, no. IC 137, and Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 22, 56, notes 26, 27, and p. 279, fig. 1b). The date of the photograph is disputed, on which see Murray 1991, p. 76, and Destremeau 1996, p. 181, note 14. Ann Galbally suggested that he might be Fabian de Castro y Heredia (1868-1948 or 1950?), a guitarist and painter who was acquainted with Picasso and Braque (Galbally 1977, p. 41). That idea then took root, but Russell's portrait of Fabian bears not the slightest resemblance to the photograph of the Spanish guitarist on p. 910 of Miguel Viribay, 'Fabian de Castor, un gitano mítico de Jaén', *Boletín del Instituto de Estudios Giennenses*, 1999, no. 172, nor does the biography of this adventurer suggest that he was living in Paris when he was 17.
15 For example, the pigments differ. A paint sample from the pink sky of Fabian's work contains lead white and vermilion, with the structure of the lead white being far finer than that used in the sky in *The hill of Montmartre*. A coarsely ground red lead was also added to various coloured passages in that work, but is absent from Fabian's landscape.
16 For the shape and composition of that expensive kind of bread, which differed from the modern variety, see Davidson 1999, pp. 228-32.
17 See London 1990-91, pp. 37-43.
18 Van Heugten 1995, p. 85, cat. 20.



5 X-radiograph of *Still life with wine, bread and cheese.*

bright red in that area. She is also wearing a white garment with a wide neck over a blouse or jacket.[19] A transparent layer of medium was later applied on top of the portrait to prepare the canvas for the present still life, which was painted fairly thickly in order to mask the underlying scene. The portrait was not completely dry at the time, as can be seen from the drying cracks at top left in the background.[20]

According to De la Faille 1928, the back of the canvas bore 'sketches: a snowdrop, a light blue forget-me-not, etc.', but they are no longer visible because the canvas was later lined.[21] A few flowery shapes can be seen in the woman's neck in the X-radiograph, which is all that we now know about those studies on the reverse. De la Faille's 'etc.' tells us that there were more studies. Snowdrops and forget-me-nots do not flower at the same time of the year, so if they were painted simultaneously they were not done from life.

Microscopic examination of the still life with the bread rolls revealed that it too is on top of an anomalous paint layer which is thin and composed of several colours – green, yellow and reddish orange – and must be either a scene that was scraped off or an initial, hesitant version of the present picture that was abandoned at a certain point. The still life was painted wet-into-wet on top of that first layer, with the colours being restricted to the three kinds of bread. A paint sample shows that the brown underlayer was not fully dry in the background when the light brown base of the present still life was applied on top.[22]

Dorn and Feilchenfeldt cautiously rejected both works in 1993 because of the overly realistic depiction of the objects: 'the rolls look edible, the red wine drinkable and the silver glistens'.[23] Van Heugten felt that the brushstrokes of the portrait under the still life with the wine 'lack both the strength and structure so characteristic of Vincent', observing that that was also the case with the still life itself. 'Only the handling of the bread is somewhat reminiscent of his free brushwork, whereas the rest is distinguished by a manner that is reserved, if not lacklustre'.[24] There are many similarities in the manner of both still lifes, and it is suspected that they are

19 The raised edges of the paint suggest that the artist used a palette knife. A paint sample from the garments shows a thick build-up of two layers consisting mainly of lead white.
20 The layer of medium may have contributed to the drying cracks.
21 De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 74: '[...] esquissés: une perce-neige, un myosotis bleu clair, etc.'. The lining was probably done in 1971; see note 28.
22 Paint analyses show that the layer consists of viridian, yellow and red ochre, vermilion, ultramarine, bone black and lead white, possibly with a little zinc white.
23 Dorn/Feilchenfeldt 1993, p. 280.

by the same artist. Dorn actually suggested in 1997 that they could be by 'a reasonably prominent French painter', but did not hazard an opinion as to who that might be.[25]

Although *Still life with bread* was taken for a Van Gogh as early as 1895, it is difficult to place within his oeuvre, as is *Still life with wine, bread and cheese.*[26] Van Gogh painted still lifes of a similar size and style from the summer of 1886 to roughly January 1887, but the subject of these two works do not feature in that repertoire. The use of pure lead white for the grounds is found nowhere else in that period. Nor does the colouring match the palette he derived from Monticelli's example (cats. 67-71), and there is a very tenuous connection at best with his still lifes from the subsequent period, when he briefly pursued a more tonal approach (see cats. 73-76). His manner in those works is far livelier though, as can be seen from *Shoes* (cat. 73), for example. Van Heugten was fully justified in describing the style of the two still lifes as 'reserved, if not lacklustre'.[27] And if the portrait underlying the wine still life was indeed partly executed with a palette knife, that would be yet another departure from Van Gogh's practice at this time.

The flower studies on the back of the canvas reinforce the idea that Van Gogh was not the artist. He sometimes painted both sides of a canvas, but there are no known examples of reverses bearing a number of separate sketches. The author of a trial entry for De la Faille's revised oeuvre catalogue of 1970 was accordingly sceptical about the attribution to Van Gogh. 'Not certain that the sketches are autograph', was the verdict, but that critical aside was deleted before publication.[28]

24 Van Heugten 1995, p. 85.
25 In an interview with Martin Bailey (Bailey 1997, p. 23).
26 Jo van Gogh-Bonger, Theo's widow, sent it as a Van Gogh to an exhibition organised by the Paris dealer Vollard in that year; see Feilchenfeldt 2005, p. 110.
27 Van Heugten 1995, p. 85.
28 'Niet zeker of de schetsen eigenhandig zijn'. That trial entry is in the work's documentation folder. The remark suggests that the back of the canvas had not yet been covered over. It is known from an annotation that the work was restored in the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, in 1971, when it was probably lined.

Appendix 2
The dates of the Antwerp and Paris paintings

The following table contains the latest findings on the dates of the paintings from Van Gogh's Antwerp and Paris periods. They are based on Hulsker's oeuvre catalogue of 1996, so are divided into the seasons of the year. We have departed from his dates when they failed to take account of other opinions or have been superseded by new information (regardless of whether or not they are reported in the present catalogue), which are listed in the 'Source' column.[1] Several paintings which Hulsker dated to the Paris period, wrongly in our view, have been omitted from the table.[2] Works with a wide date margin overlapping seasons are assigned to one season, not two. In these cases the sources should be consulted for a more precise date.

Another problem is that there are doubts about the authenticity of some of the works in Hulsker's catalogue. Those doubts are often based on an opinion rather than on an exhaustive analysis of the work in question, which makes it difficult to assess their validity, especially when they are not shared by other authors.[3] We have decided to include works doubted by just a single author, but with a reference to the publication in which the authenticity is questioned. However, if a negative opinion is shared by more than one author the work has been placed in a second table labelled 'Authenticity debated',[4] with the relevant books or articles once again listed under 'Source'.[5]

The Van Gogh Museum has investigated some paintings at the owners' request in recent decades, but since the museum does not publicise its findings without an owner's consent, mention is only made of such an investigation if it has already been made public. If the museum concluded that a work was genuine it is included in the main table with a '@' in the 'Source' column following the literature in which doubts were cast on the attribution.[6] Works rejected by the museum are listed in the 'Authenticity debatable' table, once again with a '@' under 'Source'.[7] In a few cases the entries in the present catalogue contain new information about works doubted by other authors, and sometimes those new facts constitute arguments in the discussion. If, in our opinion, they strengthen the case for the old attribution to Van Gogh, those paintings are included in the main table, but with a reference to literature in which a differing opinion is expressed.

1 In those cases where we were unconvinced by the new arguments we have retained the date proposed by Hulsker, but with a reference to the divergent opinion under 'Source'.

2 On this see p. 41, note 18, but for the sake of completeness they are listed here. F 588 JH 1335, which 'needs examination' according to Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, is now dated to 1890 (see Stein/Miller 2009, pp. 229-36). Several other works have an early Dutch provenance, so would belong to the Nuenen rather than the Paris oeuvre. They include F 14 JH 1193 (the authenticity of which has also been questioned; see Paintings 1, p. 232, note 9, and Drawings 3, p. 267, note 2, as well as Feilchenfeldt 2009, who did not list it, F 177a JH 1192 (on which see Paintings 1, pp. 230-33, cat. 44), F 197 JH 1167, F 198 JH 1125 (which also needs to be examined, according to Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424) and F 199 JH 1091. In our view, the flower still life F 282 JH 1165 dates from the summer of 1885, as does the related F 197 JH 1167. In addition, several authors place F 381 JH 1355 in Arles (Detroit etc. 2000-01, pp. 152, 253, note 35, and Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 100), but since their arguments are unconvincing we have retained the old date of late 1887. In the past F 386 JH 1365 has been dated to both Van Gogh's final months in Paris and to his first year in Arles (for an overview see Otterlo 2003, pp. 198-201, and for a fresh opinion Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 66), but early 1889 would be more logical. In addition, some authors believe that a few works which Hulsker assigns to Holland or Arles actually belong in the Paris period. Tellegen suggested that F 102 JH 937 was not painted in 1885 but in the autumn of 1886 (Tellegen 2001, p. 162), and Pickvance believed that two still lifes with crabs – F 605 JH 1663 and F 606 JH 1662 – should not be dated to Arles but to the winter of 1887-88 (Pickvance 2006, p. 501, followed by Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 67). We do not subscribe to either opinion. Walter Feilchenfeldt (ibid., p. 46) also suggested that F 591 JH 1429, a flower still life formerly dated to Arles was in fact painted in Paris, but 1890 is probably more logical.

3 A detailed analysis has been provided for F 1672a JH 1344, from which it is clear that it is a forgery, which accounts for its omission from the tables. See Koja/Stöbe 1990-91, whose opinion is either shared or has been adopted by Dorn/Feilchenfeldt 1993, pp. 302, 304, Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, and Feilchenfeldt 2009. We have also omitted from 'Authenticity debatable' three still lifes in the Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, which are no longer attributed to Van Gogh in that museum's collection catalogue (pp. 151, 152 [F 219 JH 1117], p. 153 [F 246 JH 1133], and pp. 158, 159 [F 327 JH 1126]. We do not regard the discussion about the fourth work rejected by the Kröller-Müller Museum – F 278 JH 1103 – as closed, which is why we have included it in the table.

4 The doubts are mentioned under 'Source'.

5 We have not included Martin Bailey's publications of 1997 and 1998, in which he listed the dubious Van Goghs, except where he mentions new reactions to those doubts. Feilchenfeldt omitted several paintings in his book of 2009, and sometimes he did so for reasons other than authenticity problems (see p. 8).

6 The table is also divided up into the seasons of the year in accordance with Hulsker's dates.

7 They are F 209 JH 1201 and F 287 JH 1231 as well as F 233 JH 1180, F 253 JH 1121 and F 253a JH 1232 from the museum's own collection (see Appendix 1).

Antwerp, November 1885-February 1886

JH	F	Cat.	Source
970	260	49	
971	205	45	
972	206	48	
978	174	46	
979	207		
999	212	50	
1204	207a	47	Hulsker 1996, 'winter 1886-87', but see cats. 47-48

Paris, spring 1886

JH	F	Cat.	Source
1045	215	51	
1113	232	55	Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1886', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 70, 'Frühling 1886', and see cat. 55
1175	266		Hulsker 1996, 'fall 1886', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 75, 'Herbst 1886', Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 237, 'undecided attribution', but see her revised opinion in Paris 1988, p. 142, Otterlo 2003, pp. 141, 142, Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 73, 'Herbst 1886', but see cats. 57-63
1186	271		Hulsker 1996, 'fall 1886', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 75, 'Herbst 1886', but see Van Tilborgh/ Hendriks 2009, pp. 401, 404
1195	208	52	Hulsker 1996, 'fall 1886', but see cats. 52-54
–	215c	53	Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 236, 'rejected', Amsterdam 1987, p. 365, 'rejected works', but see cats. 52-54
–	215d	54	Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 236, 'rejected', Amsterdam 1987, p. 365, 'rejected works', but see cats. 52-54

Paris, summer 1886

JH	F	Cat.	Source
1054	216a	57	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1886', but see cats. 57-63
1059	216j	63	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1886', but see cats. 57-63
1060	216b	58	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1886', but see cats. 57-63
1071	216d	60	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1886', but see cats. 57-63
1076	216f	62	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1886', but see cats. 57-63
1078	216e	61	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1886', but see cats. 57-63
1082	216c	59	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1886', but see cats. 57-63
1099	231	56	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1886', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 70, 'Frühling 1886', but see cat. 56
1100	265		Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1886', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 71, 'Frühling 1886', but see cat. 56
1101	261	66	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1886', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 71, 'Sommer 1886', and see cat. 66
1102	262		Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1886', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 72, 'Sommer 1886', and see cat. 66
1105	249		Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 54, 'Herbst 1886', but see cats. 67-69
1106	243a	68	
1109	221		Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 70, 'Frühling 1886'
1111	223		Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 70, 'Frühling 1886'
1115	274		
1116	273		
1128	286a		not in Feilchenfeldt 2009
1129	243		Dorn/Feilchenfeldt 1993, pp. 280, 282, 'attribution should be reconsidered', Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, 'zu überprüfen', Bailey 1998, p. 15, not in Feilchenfeldt 2009; @
1130	236		
1134	241		
1135	596		Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, 'zu überprüfen'
1136	235		Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 53, 'Herbst 1886', but see cats. 67-69
1137	324a		Pickvance 2006, p. 2006, p. 500, 'clearly a fake'
1138	220		Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, 'zu überprüfen'
1139	201		
1140	252		
1141	258		Welsh-Ovcharov 1996, p. 237, 'undecided attribution', Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, 'zu überprüfen', not in Feilchenfeldt 2009; @
1142	251		
1143	281	67	
1144	218	69	
1145	245		
1146	248		
1147	242		
1148	248a	70	
1149	247		
1150	248b		
1164	217		not in Feilchenfeldt 2009
1166	250		Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 50, 'Herbst 1886', but see cats. 67-69
1168	234	71	

JH	F	Cat.	Source
1176	229	64	Hulsker 1996, 'fall 1886', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 73, 'Herbst 1886', but see cats. 64, 65
1177	230	65	Hulsker 1996, 'fall 1886', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 74, 'Herbst 1886', but see cats. 64, 65
1293	324		Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 227, 237, 267, 'undecided attribution'; Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, 'zu überprüfen', Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, 'Sommer 1887'; @, and for the dating p. 41, note 18
add. 20	–		Hulsker 1996, '1886-87', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 49, 'Sommer 1886', and see p. 41, note 18
–	–		published in Van Crimpen 1991, not in Hulsker 1996 or Feilchenfeldt 2009; @

Paris, autumn 1886

JH	F	Cat.	Source
932	118		Hulsker 1996, 'September 1885', not in Feilchenfeldt 2009, but see p. 44, note 25
1089	208a	76	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1886', Vienna 1996, p. 230, 'ein Schüler der Antwerpener Akademie'?; but see cat. 76
1090	181	74	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1886', but see cats. 74, 75
1110	225		Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1886', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 76, 'Herbst 1886', and see p. 41, note 22
1112	224		Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1886', not in Feilchenfeldt 2009; and see p. 41, note 22
1124	255	73	Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1886', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 55, 'Herbst 1886', and see cat. 73
1169	256	72	
1170	227		
1171	228		
1178	238		
1179	264		Pickvance 2006, p. 501, 'sits insecurely in the Paris period', and suggests Eindhoven 1885
1194	180	75	
1208	370	84	Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 40, 'Frühling 1887', but see cat. 84
1233	332a		Hulsker 1966, 'spring 1887'; Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 55, 'Herbst 1886', and see cat. 73
1234	332		Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887'; Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 54, 'Winter 1886', and see cat. 73
add. 1	–		Hulsker 1996, '1886'; not in Feilchenfeldt 2009
add. 2	–		not in Feilchenfeldt 2009
–	–		published in Van Tilborgh/Hendriks 2009

Paris, winter 1886-87

JH	F	Cat.	Source
1055	216g	86	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1886', but see cats. 85-87
1058	216h	87	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1886', but see cats. 85-87
1072	216i	85	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1886', but see cats. 85-87
1120	283		Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1886'; Feilchenfeldt 2009, p.46, 'Sommer 1886', but see cat. 72, note 2
1123	203		Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1886'; Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 47, 'Sommer 1886', but see cat. 72, note 2
1199	263a	77	Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 35, 'Anfang 1886', but see cat. 77
1200	288		
1202	263		
1205	215b	83	Hulsker 1996, 'no longer attributed to Van Gogh', but see cat. 83
1207	270		Pickvance 2006, p. 501, 'difficult to accept as a genuine Van Gogh'
1212	328		
1214	330		
1215	329		Drawings 3, p. 249, note 6, 'doubts about its attribution', but see Otterlo 2003, pp. 164-67
1216	357		
1226	335	82	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 56, 'Frühling 1887', but see cats. 81, 82
1227	336	81	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 56, 'Frühling 1887', but see cats. 81, 82
1228	334	79	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 56, 'Frühling 1887', but see cats. 79, 80
1229	337	80	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 56, 'Frühling 1887', but see cats. 79, 80
1235	331	78	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 57, 'Frühling 1887', but see cat. 78
1236	333		Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 55, 'Anfang 1887', and see cat. 78
1237	338	88	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 56, 'Frühling 1887', but see cats. 88, 89
1238	339	90	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 56, 'Frühling 1887', but see cat. 90
1239	340	89	Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 57, 'Frühling 1887', but see cats. 88, 89

Paris, spring 1887

JH	F	Cat.	Source
1093	244	102	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1886', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 46, 'Frühling 1886', but see cat. 102
1182	348		Hulsker 1996, 'fall 1886', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 76, 'Herbst 1886', but see p. 43, note 21
1183	272		Hulsker 1996, 'fall 1886', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 74, 'Herbst 1886', but see p. 43, note 21
1184	349		Hulsker 1996, 'fall 1886', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 76, 'Herbst 1886', but see p. 43, note 21
1206	369	96	Hulsker 1996, 'winter 1886-87', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 40, 'Frühling 1887', and see cat. 96
1211	295		Hulsker 1996, 'winter 1886-87', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 35, 'Winter 1886/87', but see cats. 97, 98
1219	292	94	Hulsker 1996, 'winter 1886-87', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 82, 'Frühling 1887', and see cat. 94
1221	348a		Hulsker 1996, 'winter 1886-87', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 77, 'Früling 1887', and see p. 45, note 27
1223	266a	91	Hulsker 1996, 'winter 1886-87', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 77, 'Frühling 1887', and see cat. 91
1224	267	97	
1225	380		
1240			Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 77, 'Frühling 1887', and see cat. 92
1241	347	92	Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 90, Frühling 1887', and see cat. 92
1242	341	95	
1243	341a		
1244	346	93	
1248	356	98	Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 41, 'Sommer 1887', but see cat. 98
1249	345		
1250	343		
1256	342		Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 95, 'Sommer 1887', but see p. 78, note 119
1258	314	104	
1259	276		Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 94, 'Sommer 1887', but see cat. 104
1260	361		Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 94, 'Sommer 1887', but see cat. 103
1263	583		
1272	270a	103	
1278	275	101	Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 89, 'Sommer 1887', but see cat. 101

JH	F	Cat.	Source
1292	322		Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1887'; Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 59, 'Sommer 1887', but see cat. 102, note 7
1295	323		Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 59, 'Sommer 1887', but see cat. 102, note 7
1346	297	100	Hulsker 1996, 'winter 1887-88', but see cats. 99, 100
1347	297a	99	Hulsker 1996, 'winter 1887-88', but see cats. 99, 100
1348	216		Hulsker 1996, 'winter 1887-88', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 66, 'Winter 1886/87', but see cats. 99, 100, note 5

Paris, summer 1887

JH	F	Cat.	Source
1092	214		Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1886', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 46, 'Frühling 1886', but see cat. 102, note 7
1191	28	123	Hulsker 1996, 'fall 1886?', but see cat. 123
1209	294	121	Hulsker 1996, 'winter 1886-87', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 39, 'Frühling 1887', but see cats. 121, 22
1210	296	122	Hulsker 1996, 'winter 1886-87', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 39, 'Frühling 1887', but see cats. 121, 22
1245	350		Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 92, 'Sommer 1887', and see cat. 115
1246	316	115	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 91, 'Sommer 1887', and see cat. 115
1247	213		Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 58, 'Frühling 1887', but see cat. 102, note 7
1251	313		Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 86, 'Sommer 1887', and see cat. 105
1253	312		Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 85, 'Sommer 1887', and see cat. 105
1254	299	107	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 89, 'Sommer 1887', and see cat. 105
1255	351		Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 90, 'Frühling 1887', but see cat. 105
1257	298		Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 79, 'Frühling 1887', but see cat. 105
1261	367		Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 87, 'Frühling 1887', but see cat. 105

JH	F	Cat.	Source
1262	368		Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 88, 'Sommer 1887', and see cat. 105
1264	362		Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 78, 'Frühling 1887', but see cats. 111, 12
1265	305		Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 79, 'Frühling 1887', but see cat. 105
1266	355		Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 82, 'Sommer 1887', and see cat. 105
1268	240		Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 89, 'Sommer 1887', and see cat. 105
1269	293	106	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 86, 'Sommer 1887', and see cat. 106
1270	354		Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 88, 'Frühling 1887', but see cat. 105
1271	353		Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', but see cat. 105
1273	310a		Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 87, 'Sommer 1887', and see cat. 105
1274	310	110	Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 83, 'Sommer 1887', and see cat. 110
1275	300		Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 85, 'Sommer 1887', and see cat. 105
1287	317		
1288	318		
1294	286b		not in Feilchenfeldt 2009
1299	268		Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 237, 'undecided attribution', Dorn/Feilchenfeldt 1993, pp. 290, 298, 'attribution should be reconsidered', Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, 'zu überprüfen', Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1887', not in Feilchenfeldt 2009, but for a new argument see cats. 116-20
1300	179v	116	Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 38, 'Frühling 1887', but see cats. 116-20
1301	269v	117	Ibid.
1302	61v	118	Ibid.
1303	109v	119	Ibid.
1304	77v	120	Ibid.
1306	264a		
1307	388v	114	
1309	526		
1310	469	125	
1311	321	105	
1312	309a	112	
1313	308	113	
1314	291		
1315	309	109	Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 96, 'Herbst 1887', but see cat. 109
1316	277		Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 79, 'Frühling 1887', but see cats. 101, 105
1317	306		
1318	307	111	
1320	315		
1321	352		
1322	302		
1323	303		
1325	311		
1326	304	108	
1327	301		
1328	377	124	
1329	375		
1330	452		
1331	376		
1345	366		Hulsker 1996, 'winter 1887-88', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 43, 'Winter 1887/88', but see cats. 116-20, note 2
1354	365v		Dorn/Feilchenfeldt 1993, pp. 296, 300, 'attribution should be reconsidered'; Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, 'zu überprüfen'; Hulsker 1996, 'winter 1887-88'; Bailey 1997, p. 23; not in Feilchenfeldt 2009, but for a new argument see p. 435, note 2
1483	562		Hulsker 1996, '17-23 June 1888'; not in Feilchenfeldt 2009; see p. 49, note 32
1676	460		Hulsker 1996, 'April 1889', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 93, 'Frühling 1887', but see p. 49, note 32
2109	810		

Paris, autumn-winter 1887-88

JH	F	Cat.	Source
1203	289	136	
1267	239		Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887', not in Feilchenfeldt 2009; but see p. 49
1296	371	131	Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 68, 'Sommer 1887'; but see cat. 131
1297	372	132	Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 68, 'Sommer 1887', but see cat. 132
1298	373	133	Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1887', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 69, 'Sommer 1887', but see cat. 133

JH	F	Cat.	Source
1332	359		
1333	319		
1334	320		
1336	603	127	
1337	382		
1338	374	135	
1339	383	128	
1340	378		
1341	379		
1342	254	126	
1343	602		
1348	216		Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 66, 'Winter 1886/87'
1349	360		
1351	363		
1352	364		
1353	344	130	
1355	381		Hulsker 1996, 'winter 1887-88', Detroit etc. 2000-01, pp. 152, 253, note 35, 'its style clearly indicates Arles'; Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 100, 'Arles, August 1888'
1356	522	137	
1565	524	129	Hulsker 1996, 'August 1888?', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 42, 'Sommer 1887', but see cat. 129
1572	549		Hulsker 1996, 'second half August 1888', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 87, 'Sommer 1887', but see cat. 136
1573	549a		Hulsker 1996, 'second half August 1888', not in Feilchenfeldt 2009; see further cat. 136, note 12
1612	358	134	Hulsker 1996, 'second half October 1888', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 65, 'Winter 1887/88', and see cat. 134

Authenticity debated

Paris, spring 1886

JH	F	Cat.	Source
1094	666		Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, 'zu überprüfen'; Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1886', not in Feilchenfeldt 2009

Paris, summer 1886

JH	F	Cat.	Source
1103	278		Dorn/Feilchenfeldt 1993, p. 280, 'attribution should be reconsidered', Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, 'nicht authentisch'; Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1886'; Bailey 1998, p. 15; Otterlo 2003, pp. 155-57, 'formerly attributed to Vincent van Gogh'; not in Feilchenfeldt 2009
1104	279		Dorn/Feilchenfeldt 1993, p. 280, 'attribution should be reconsidered'; Bailey 1998, p. 15; Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1886'; Dorn 2000, p. 156, 'früher Vincent van Gogh zugeschrieben'; not in Feilchenfeldt 2009
1107	666a		Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 227, 267, 'tentatively accept its attribution'; Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, 'nicht authentisch'; Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1886'; not in Feilchenfeldt 2009
1108	222		Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 237, 'undecided attribution'; Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, 'nicht authentisch'; Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1886'; Winterthur 2002-03, p. 59, 'there is little to contradict an attribution to Van Gogh'; Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 72, 'Sommer 1886'
1114	1672		Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, 'zu überprüfen'; Hulsker 1996, '27 July 1886'; not in Feilchenfeldt 2009
1118	285		Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, 'zu überprüfen'; Dorn 2000, p. 169, 'noch Vincent van Gogh zugeschrieben'; Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1886'; Winterthur 2003, p. 538, 'ehemals zugeschrieben', Feilchenfeldt 2009, p. 47, 'Sommer 1886', and see cat. 72, note 4
1119	1670		Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 237, 'undecided attribution'; Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, 'zu überprüfen'; Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1886', not in Feilchenfeldt 2009
1122	1671		Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 236, 'rejected'; Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, 'zu überprüfen'; Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1886'; not in Feilchenfeldt 2009
1127	286		Dorn/Feilchenfeldt 1993, p. 285, 'attribution should be reconsidered'; Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, 'zu überprüfen'; Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1886'; not in Feilchenfeldt 2009

JH	F	Cat.	Source
1131	237		Dorn/Feilchenfeldt 1993, pp. 283, 285, 'attribution should be reconsidered'; Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, 'zu überprüfen'; Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1886'; not in Feilchenfeldt 2009
1132	259		Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, 'zu überprüfen'; Hulsker 1996, 'summer 1886'; not in Feilchenfeldt 2009

Paris, autumn 1886

JH	F	Cat.	Source
1172	226		Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 237, 'undecided attribution'; Hulsker 1996, 'fall 1886'; Dorn 2000, p. 163, 'noch Vincent van Gogh zugeschrieben'; Van Tilborgh/Hendriks 2001, p. 30, note 82, 'an examination should be made'; Eva-Maria Preiswerk-Lösel, *Ein Haus für die Impressionisten. Das Museum Langmatt*, Baden 2001, pp. 294, 295, 'der Restaurator Paul Pfister legt Argumente für die Authentizität des Werkes vor'; Otterlo 2003, p. 163, 'serious questions have been raised about the authenticity'; not in Feilchenfeldt 2009
1198	178v		Dorn/Feilchenfeldt 1993, p. 299, 'attribution should be reconsidered'; Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, 'zu überprüfen'; Hulsker 1996, 'fall 1886'; Bailey 1997, pp. 22, 23; not in Feilchenfeldt 2009

Paris, April-May 1887

JH	F	Cat.	Source
1230	283b		Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, p. 236, 'rejected'; Arnold 1995, p. 836, note 424, 'nicht authentisch'; Hulsker 1996, 'spring 1887'; not in Feilchenfeldt 2009

Documentation

Exhibitions

1887-88 Paris Théâtre Libre d'Antoine, winter
Title unknown

1888 Paris Pavillon de la Ville, 22 March-3 May
Société des Artistes Indépendants. 4e exposition

1892 Amsterdam Firma Buffa en Zonen, February
Vincent van Gogh (no cat.)
Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant 16-2-1892

1892 Rotterdam Kunstzalen Oldenzeel, March
Vincent van Gogh schilderijen en teekeningen (no cat. known)
Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant 6-3-1892 and 13-3-1892, b1287

1892 The Hague Haagsche Kunstkring [Buitenhof], 16 May-6 June
Werken van Vincent van Gogh
Het Vaderland 18-5-1892

1892-93 Amsterdam Kunstzaal Panorama, 7 December-5 February
Tentoonstelling der nagelaten werken van Vincent van Gogh
Dagblad De Amsterdammer 1-1-1893

1893 Copenhagen Den Frie Udstilling, 26 March- end of May
Den Frie Udstilling
Politiken 16-3-1937, Copenhagen 1984

1895 Paris Galerie Vollard, 4-30 June
Exposition Van Gogh (no cat.)
Kunstwereld, June 1895 no. 24, VA, b7199

1896-97 Paris Galerie Vollard, December-February
[Vincent van Gogh] (no cat.)
b1437, b3055

1901-02 Berlin Cassirer, December-January
Title unknown (no cat.)
b2186

1903 Wiesbaden Festsaale des Rathauses, 4-30 October
Ausstellung der holländischen Secession
b3257

1904 Groningen Kunsthandel Scholtens & Zoon, 3?-19 March
Tentoonstelling van schilderijen van Vincent van Gogh (no cat. known)
b1956

1905 Berlin I Cassirer, 28 April-May
VII. Ausstellung
b2185

1905 Amsterdam I Stedelijk Museum, 15 July-1 September
Tentoonstelling Vincent van Gogh
1908 Paris, 1909-10 Munich etc., 1912 Dresden, Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant 2-1906, Wereldkroniek 1906, p. 739, b2192, b2204, b5422, b6240-41, b7194

1905 Amsterdam II Stedelijk Museum, c. 15 August-1 September (supplementary to 1905 Amsterdam I)
Tentoonstelling Vincent van Gogh
Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant 21-8-1905, b2192, b2201

1905 Utrecht Vereeniging 'Voor de Kunst', 10 September-1 October
Tentoonstelling van schilderijen door Vincent van Gogh
1905 Amsterdam I, b5602, b7192

1905 Hamburg Cassirer, September-October
I. Ausstellung
1905 Amsterdam I, 1905 Amsterdam II, b2183

1905 Leiden Leidsche Kunstvereeniging, 7-16 October
Tentoonstelling van schilderijen door Vincent van Gogh
1905 Amsterdam I, b1952, b5433, b5686, b7193, b7202

1905 Dresden Kunst-Salon Ernst Arnold, 26 October-11 November
II. Ausstellung
1905 Hamburg

1905 Berlin II Cassirer, December
Title unknown (no cat.)
1905 Hamburg

1906 Vienna Galerie Miethke, 6-30 January
Vincent van Gogh. Kollektiv
1905 Hamburg

1906 Rotterdam Kunstzalen Oldenzeel, 26 January-28 February
Tentoonstelling Vincent van Gogh
1905 Amsterdam I, b5426, b5433, b5442, b7193

1906 MIDDELBURG Sociëteit Sint Joris, 25 March-1 April
Tentoonstelling van werken van Vincent van Gogh (verzameling mevr. Cohen Gosschalk) (no cat.)
1906 Rotterdam, b5439, b5443, b5446

1907 ROTTERDAM Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 16 March-11 April
Keuze-tentoonstelling van Nederlandsche portretkunst der laatste vijftig jaren (schilderijen en waterverfteekeningen)

1908 PARIS Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, 6 January-1 February
Cent tableaux de Vincent van Gogh
1905 Amsterdam I, b4046

1908 BERLIN I Cassirer, 5-22 March
VII. Ausstellung
1905 Amsterdam I, b4046

1908 MUNICH Moderne Kunsthandlung, March-April
Vincent van Gogh
1905 Amsterdam I, b3918

1908 DRESDEN Emil Richter, April-May
Vincent van Gogh/Paul Cézanne
1905 Amsterdam I, b2191, b3905, b3918

1908 FRANKFURT AM MAIN Frankfurter Kunstverein, 14-28 June
V. van Gogh Ausstellung
1908 Dresden

1908 ZÜRICH Künstlerhaus, 10-26 July
Vincent van Gogh, Cuno Amiet, Hans Emmenegger, Giovanni Giacometti
1908 Dresden

1908 THE HAGUE Kunstzalen C.M. van Gogh, dates unknown; AMSTERDAM Kunstzalen C.M. van Gogh, 3-24 September
Vincent van Gogh tentoonstelling (The Hague no cat. known)
1905 Amsterdam I, 1908 Berlin II, Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant 9-9-1908, b5417, b5418

1908 BERLIN II Cassirer, October
Title unknown (no cat. known)
1905 Amsterdam i, b4058

1908 BERLIN III Cassirer, 15 October-8 November
II. Ausstellung
1988 Feilchenfeldt

1909 BERLIN Cassirer, May
Title unknown (no cat.)
1905 Amsterdam I, b4061

1909 ROTTERDAM Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 11 September-10 October
Tentoonstelling van het Hollandsche stilleven in den loop der tijden

1909-10 MUNICH Brakl, October-December; FRANKFURT AM MAIN Residence, Herr Marcus (director Frankfurter Kunstverein), January; DRESDEN Galerie Ernst Arnold, February-March; CHEMNITZ Kunstsalon Gerstenberger, April
Vincent van Gogh (cat. Munich, otherwise no cat. known)
b2181, b3851, b3871, b3902, 1905 Amsterdam I, 1905 Amsterdam II

1910 BERLIN Cassirer, 25 October-20 November
III. Ausstellung. Vincent van Gogh 1853-1890
b2184

1910 LEIDEN Het Leidsche Volkshuis, 14 November-closing date unknown
Schilderijen en tekeningen van Van Gogh (no cat. known)
1905 Amsterdam I, b1953

1910-11 LONDON Grafton Galleries, 8 November-16 January
Manet and the post-impressionists
Hind 1911, after p. 80, b5871

1911 FRANKFURT AM MAIN Galerie Hermes, January
Title unknown (no cat. known)
1910 Berlin, b4076

1911 AMSTERDAM Larensche Kunsthandel, 16 June-July
Tentoonstelling van schilderijen, aquarellen en teekeningen van Vincent van Gogh
1905 Amsterdam I, b5479

1911-12 HAMBURG Galerie Commeter, November-January
[Vincent van Gogh] (no cat. known)
1905 Amsterdam I, b3817

1911-12 BREMEN Kunsthalle Bremen, 6 December-8 January
No title (no cat.)
1911-12 Hamburg, Archives Kunsthalle Bremen, b3824

1912 DRESDEN & BRESLAU Galerie Arnold, February
Ausstellung Vincent van Gogh 1853-1890
1911-12 Hamburg

1913 NEW YORK 69th Regiment Armory, 17 February-15 March
International exhibition of modern art
Utica/New York 1963, Brown 1988

1913 CHICAGO The Art Institute of Chicago, 24 March-16 April
International exhibition of modern art
Utica/New York 1963, Brown 1988

1913 BOSTON Copley Hall, 28 April-18 May
International exhibition of modern art
Utica/New York 1963, Brown 1988

1913 THE HAGUE Gebouw Lange Voorhout 1, July-1 September
Werken van Vincent van Gogh

1914 ANTWERP Feestzaal, 7 March-5 April
L'art contemporain. Salon 1914 / Kunst van Heden. Tentoonstelling 1914
1914 Berlin, exhibition gallery photograph, b4081, b5703

1914 BERLIN Cassirer, 1 June-5 July
Vincent van Gogh 30. März 1853-29. July 1890. Zehnte Ausstellung

1914 MONS Bon Vouloir, 20 June-12 July
XIXe Salon

1914 COLOGNE Kölner Kunstverein, July-August; HAMBURG Galerie Commeter, September
V. van Gogh (no cat. known)
1914 Berlin, b4081-82

1920 NEW YORK Montross Gallery, 23 October-31 December
Vincent van Gogh exhibition
1905 Amsterdam 1, New York Tribune 7-11-1920, b6240-41

1920 VENICE location and dates unknown
XIIa esposizione internazionale d'arte della citta di Venezia
De la Faille 1970

1921 PARIS unknown location, April-May
Exposition Hollandaise. Tableaux, aquarelles et dessins anciens et modernes
b5779

1921 NEW YORK The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 3 May-15 September
Loan exhibition of impressionist and post-impressionist paintings

1923 AMSTERDAM Stedelijk Museum, September
Tentoonstelling van Nederlandsche Beeldende Kunsten

1923-24 LONDON The Leicester Galleries, 1 December-15 January
Works by Vincent van Gogh
Sunday Times 2-12-1923, b5935

1924 AMSTERDAM Gebouw voor Beeldende Kunst, March-April
Vincent van Gogh tentoonstelling

1924 BASEL Kunsthalle Basel, 27 March-4 May
Vincent van Gogh
1923-24 London, Stadsarchiv Basel, b6060

1924 ZÜRICH Kunsthaus Zürich, 3 July-10 August
Vincent van Gogh
1924 Basel, b6070, b6073

1924 STUTTGART Württembergischer Kunstverein, 12 October-30 November
Ausstellung Vincent van Gogh 1853-1890
1924 Zürich, b6139, b6159

1925 PARIS Galerie Marcel Bernheim, 5-24 January
Exposition rétrospective d'oeuvres de Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890)
1924 Stuttgart, b5815, b6157

1925 THE HAGUE Pulchri Studio, March-26 April
Vincent van Gogh (no cat.)
1925 Paris, De la Faille 1970, b5515, b5537-38, b5541

1925 POTSDAM Potsdamer Kunstverein?, summer
50 Jahre holländische Malerei 1875-1925

1926 THE HAGUE Gemeentemuseum voor moderne kunst, 27 February-31 March
Nederlandsche stillevens uit vijf eeuwen

1926 VENICE unknown location, April-October
Biennale, XV Expossizione Internazionale d'Arte della città di Venezia
Algemeen Handelsblad 21-7-1926, b6107

1926 AMSTERDAM Stedelijk Museum, 15 May-15 June
Vincent van Gogh tentoonstelling ter gelegenheid van het internationale jeugdfeest der S.J.I.
Amstelbode 28-5-1926, Opgang 29-5-1926, Oprechte Haarlemsche Courant 5-6-1926

1926 MUNICH Glaspalast, 1 June-3 October
I. AllgeMayne Kunst-Ausstellung
The Art Digest 1-12-1926, De La Faille 1970, b6171

1926 DRESDEN Staatliche Gemäldegalerie, 12 June-30 September
Internationale Kunstausstellung

1926-27 LONDON The Leicester Galleries, 26 November-6 January
Vincent van Gogh exhibition
b5959

1927 BERLIN Galerie Matthiesen, February-March
Das Stilleben in der Deutschen und Französischen Malerei von 1850 bis zur Gegenwart

1927 PARIS Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, 20 June-2 July
Vincent van Gogh. l'époque française (no cat.)
De la Faille 1970

1928 BERLIN Cassirer, 15 January-closing date unknown
Vincent van Gogh. Gemälde

1928 FRANKFURT AM MAIN Galerie Goldschmidt, 15 March-15 April
Vincent van Gogh. Gemälde
1928 Berlin

1928 VIENNA Neue Galerie, May-17 June
Vincent van Gogh. Gemälde
1928 Berlin

1928-29 HANOVER Kestner-Gesellschaft, 3 October-11 November; MUNICH Graphisches Kabinett, 22 November-24 December; LEIPZIG Museum der bildenden Künste, 24 February-31 March
Vincent van Gogh. Fünfunddreißig unbekannte Gemälde aus Privatbesitz (Hanover no cat., Leipzig no cat. known)
b6202-03, b6206

1929 LONDON Royal Academy of Arts, 4 January-9 March
Exhibition of Dutch art 1450-1900

1929 UTRECHT Vereeniging Voor de Kunst, 1 May-5 June
Tentoonstelling van schilderijen door Vincent van Gogh
Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant 18-5-1929, De Maasbode 21-5-1929, b5644

1929 AMSTERDAM Maatschappij Arti et Amicitiae, December
Tentoonstelling Nederlandsche portretkunst

1930 AMERSFOORT Gebouw van de Stichting 'de Armen de Poth', March
[Tentoonstelling van schilderijen door Vincent van Gogh] (no cat. known)
1929 Utrecht, RKD archives

1930 LONDON The Leicester Galleries, 28 May-June
Vincent van Gogh
New Statesman 31-5-1930, b5999

1930 AMSTERDAM Stedelijk Museum, 6 September-2 November
Vincent van Gogh en zijn tijdgenooten

1930 HILVERSUM Makkermacht, 29-30 November
Title unknown (no cat. known)
b5673

1931 AMSTERDAM Stedelijk Museum, 14 February-closing date unknown
Vincent van Gogh. Werken uit de verzameling van Ir. V.W. van Gogh, in bruikleen afgestaan aan de Gemeente Amsterdam

1932 COLOGNE Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, 10 June-closing date unknown
21 Gemälde von Vincent van Gogh (no cat. known)
1932 Manchester, b5464

1932 MANCHESTER Manchester City Art Gallery, 13 October-27 November
Vincent van Gogh. Loan collection of paintings & drawings

1933 AMSTERDAM Kunsthandel J. Goudstikker, 18 February-19 March
Het stilleven

1935 BRUSSELS Palais des Beaux-Arts, 15 June-29 September
L'impressionnisme
b5711

1935 AMSTERDAM Van Wisselingh, 15 July-17 August
Exposition de peinture française XIXme siècle

1935-36 NEW YORK The Museum of Modern Art, 5 November-5 January; PHILADELPHIA Philadelphia Museum of Art, 11 January-10 February; BOSTON Museum of Fine Arts, 19 February-15 March; CLEVELAND Cleveland Museum of Art, 25 March-19 April; SAN FRANCISCO California Palace of the Legion of Honor, 28 April-24 May; KANSAS CITY William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and Atkins Museum, 9 June-10 July; MINNEAPOLIS Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 20 July-17 August; CHICAGO The Art Institute of Chicago, 26 August-23 September; DETROIT Detroit Institute of Arts, 6-28 October
Vincent van Gogh

1936 BATAVIA Museum van den Bataviaschen Kunstkring, January-closing date unknown
Tweede collectie Regnault

1936-37 ROTTERDAM Museum Boijmans, 23 December-25 January
De divisionisten. Van Georges Seurat tot Jan Toorop

1937 AMSTERDAM Residence, Gabriël Metsustraat 13, 26 January
[Collectie A. Bonger] (no cat.)
Niehaus 1937

1937 PARIS Les nouveaux musées, Quai de Tokyo, June-October
La vie et l'oeuvre de Van Gogh

1937 OSLO Kunstnernes Hus, 3-24 December
Vincent van Gogh. Malerier, tegninger, akvareller

1938 COPENHAGEN Charlottenborg, January
Vincent van Gogh. Malerier, tegninger, akvareller

1938 LONDON The Leicester Galleries, March-April
Artists who died young

1938 EINDHOVEN Stedelijk Van Abbe-museum, 11 June-1 July
Schilders van de Haagsche School

1938-39 BATAVIA Museum van den Bataviaschen Kunstkring, 17 May-mid January
Vierde collectie Regnault
b6336

1939 SURABAYA Kunstkringhuis Soerabayische Kunstkring, 13-19 January
Expositie van schilderijen van Vincent van Gogh
1938-39 Batavia, Ons Kringnieuws 5-1-1939

1939 BANDUNG Jaarbeursgebouw, 24-31 January
Vierde collectie Regnault (no cat.)
1938-39 Batavia, Algemeen Indisch Dagblad 18-1-1939

1939 SAN FRANCISCO Treasure Island, Palace of Fine and Decorative Arts, 18 February-29 October
Masterworks of five centuries

1939-40 SAN FRANCISCO M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, 29 December-28 January
Seven centuries of painting. A loan exhibition of old and modern masters

1940 CLEVELAND The Cleveland Museum of Art, 7 February-7 March
Masterpieces of art from the New York and San Francisco World's Fairs

1940 CAMBRIDGE Fogg Art Museum, 18 March-10 April; NEW HAVEN Gallery of Fine Arts of Yale University, 14 April-28 May
Paintings by Vincent van Gogh (no cat.)
1938-39 Batavia, The Art Digest 1-6-1940

1940 NEW YORK Holland House, 6 June-19 July
Exhibition of paintings by Vincent van Gogh

1941 CHAPEL HILL Person Hall Art Gallery, 3-21 February
Paintings from the family collection of Van Gogh

1941 BOSTON Jordan Marsh Company Galleries, 3-16 March
Title unknown (no cat. known)
1938-39 Batavia, Boston Herald 3-3-1941

1941 SPOKANE The Spokane Art Center, 12-22 December
A collection of fourteen original oil paintings by Vincent van Gogh from the Municipal Museum of Amsterdam
1938-39 Batavia

1942 DAYTON The Dayton Art Institute, 1 March-1 April
Vincent van Gogh

1942 BALTIMORE The Baltimore Museum of Art, 18 September-18 October; WORCESTER Worcester Art Museum, 28 October-28 November
Paintings by Van Gogh

1942 PROVIDENCE Museum of Art at Rhode Island School of Design, 5-30 December
Fifteen paintings by Van Gogh. Lent by the Netherlands Government (no cat. known)
1938-39 Batavia

1943 ALBANY Albany Institute of History & Art, 6-26 January; PITTSBURGH Carnegie Institute, 5 February-1 March; TOLEDO Toledo Museum of Art, 7-28 March
An exhibition of modern Dutch art. 14 paintings by Vincent van Gogh and work by contemporary Dutch artists

1943 NORTHAMPTON Smith College Museum of Art, 5-22 April; PHILADELPHIA The Philadelphia Art Alliance, 30 April-23 May; MONTGOMERY Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, 30 May-30 June
*Paintings by Vincent van Gogh/Oils by Van Gogh (*Northampton and Montgomery no cat. known)
b6321

1943 SAINT LOUIS City Art Museum of St. Louis, 17 July-15 August
An exhibition of modern Dutch art. 14 paintings by Vincent van Gogh and work by contemporary Dutch artists

1943 SPRINGFIELD The George Walter Vincent Smith Art Gallery, September
Paintings by Vincent van Gogh and contemporary Dutch artists (no cat. known)
1938-39 Batavia, b6321

1943 NEW YORK Wildenstein, 6 October-7 November
The art and life of Vincent van Gogh. Loan exhibition in aid of American and Dutch war relief

1943-44 INDIANAPOLIS John Herron Art Institute, 8 November-12 December; CINCINNATI Cincinnati Art Museum, 5-30 January; OTTAWA National Gallery, 11-27 February
An exhibition of modern Dutch art. 14 paintings by Vincent van Gogh and work by contemporary Dutch artists

1944 MONTREAL Art Association of Montreal, 9 March-9 April
Loan exhibition of great paintings. Five centuries of Dutch Art/Exposition de tableaux célèbres. Cinq siècles d'art Hollandais
1938-39 Batavia

1944 FORT WAYNE Fort Wayne Art School & Museum, 10-29 May
An exhibition of modern Dutch art. 14 paintings by Vincent van Gogh and work by contemporary Dutch artists

1944 NEW YORK The Brooklyn Museum, 28 June-24 September
Paintings by Vincent van Gogh

1944 RICHMOND Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 1-22 October
Modern Dutch art. Art of our allies series (no cat.)
1938-39 Batavia

1944 CHARLESTON Gibbes Art Gallery, 29 October-26 November
Paintings by Vincent van Gogh

1944 ATLANTA High Museum of Art, 3-27 December
Paintings by Van Gogh (no cat. known)
1938-39 Batavia

1945 NEW ORLEANS Isaac Delgado Museum, 7-28 January; LOUISVILLE J.B. Speed Memorial Museum, 4-25 February; SYRACUSE The Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts, 4-25 March
Paintings by Vincent van Gogh (Syracuse no cat., New Orleans no cat. known)
1938-39 Batavia, b6321

1945 TORONTO Art Gallery of Toronto, 6-29 April; QUEBEC Musée du Quebec, 11 May-3 June
Paintings by Vincent van Gogh (Toronto no cat. known)
1938-39 Batavia, b6321

1945 NEW YORK The Museum of Modern Art, 3-26 August
Fourteen paintings by Vincent van Gogh (no cat.)
1938-39 Batavia, b6320

1945 AMSTERDAM Stedelijk Museum, 14 September-1 December
Vincent van Gogh

1945 NORWICH The Slater Memorial Museum, 2-19 December
Paintings by Vincent van Gogh

1945-46 AMSTERDAM Van Wisselingh, 17 December-26 January
Exposition de peinture

1946 MAASTRICHT Bonnefanten, 12-28 January; HEERLEN Raadhuis, 8-24 February
Vincent van Gogh
1946 Stockholm, Gothenburg & Malmö

1946 STOCKHOLM Nationalmuseum, 8 March-28 April; GOTHENBURG Götenborgs Konstmuseum, 3-26 May; MALMÖ Malmö Museum, 29 May-16 June
Vincent van Gogh. Utställning anordnad till förmån för svenska hollandshjälpen

1946 COPENHAGEN Charlottenborg, 22 June-14 July
Vincent van Gogh. Udstilling af malerier og tegninger

1946-47 LIÈGE Musée des Beaux-Arts, 12 October-3 November; BRUSSELS Palais des Beaux-Arts, 9 November-19 December; MONS Musée des Beaux-Arts, 27 December-January
Vincent van Gogh

1947 PARIS Musée de l'Orangerie, 24 January-15 March
Vincent van Gogh
1946-47 Liège, Brussels & Mons

1947 GENEVA Musée Rath, 22 March-20 April
172 oeuvres de Vincent van Gogh (1852-1890)
1947 Paris, b6793

1947 PRAGUE Manes, 18 May-half June
De Van Gogh jusqu'à Sluijters (no cat. known)
ASM

1947 GRONINGEN Museum van Oudheden, 18 October-16 November
Vincent van Gogh

1947-48 LONDON Tate Gallery, 10 December-14 January; BIRMINGHAM City Art Gallery, 24 January-14 February; GLASGOW City Art Gallery, 21 February-14 March
Vincent van Gogh 1853-1890

1948 BERGEN Kunstforening, 23 March-18 April; OSLO Kunstnernes Hus, 24 April-15 May
Vincent van Gogh

1948 AMSTERDAM Stedelijk Museum, 25 June-20 September
Vincent van Gogh en zijn Nederlandse tijdgenoten
BSM

1948-49 THE HAGUE Gemeentemuseum, 12 October-10 January
Vincent van Gogh. Collectie ir. V.W. van Gogh

1949 MIDDELBURG Kunstmuseum, 9 April-1 May
Van Gogh-tentoonstelling

1949 BOLSWARD Town Hall, 2-28 May
19e eeuwse kunstschatten uit het Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam
(no cat. known)
BSM

1949-50 NEW YORK The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 21 October-15 January; CHICAGO The Art Institute of Chicago, 1 February-16 April
Vincent van Gogh paintings and drawings. A special loan exhibition

1950 HILVERSUM Town Hall, 7 October-5 November
Tentoonstelling Vincent van Gogh

1951 LYONS Musée de Lyons, 5 February-27 March; GRENOBLE Musée de Grenoble, 30 March-2 May
Vincent van Gogh

1951 ARLES Musée Réattu, 5-27 May
Vincent van Gogh en Provence

1951 SAINT-RÉMY Hotel de Sade, 5-27 May
Vincent van Gogh en Provence
1951 Arles

1951 ALBI Musée d'Albi, 11 August-28 October
Toulouse-Lautrec, ses amis et ses maîtres. Cinquantenaire de la mort de Toulouse-Lautrec
IVGM

1951-52 NIJMEGEN Waaggebouw, 3-27 November; ALKMAAR Stedelijk Museum, 1 December-1 January
Tentoonstelling schilderijen van Vincent van Gogh
BSM

1952 ENSCHEDE Rijksmuseum Twenthe, 20 February-16 March
Vincent van Gogh
BSM

1952 MILAN Palazzo Reale, 23 February-13 May
Van Gogh. Dipinti e disegni

1952 Eindhoven Stedelijk Van Abbe museum, 22 March-4 May
Vincent van Gogh

1952 London The Redfern Gallery, 26 March-26 April
Some aspects of modern dutch painting

1953 Zundert Parochiehuis, 30 March-20 April
Vincent van Gogh in Zundert

1953 The Hague Gemeentemuseum, 30 March-17 May
Vincent van Gogh

1953 Hoensbroek Kasteel Hoensbroek, 23 May-27 July
Vincent van Gogh
BSM

1953 Otterlo Kröller-Müller Museum, 24 May-19 July; Amsterdam Stedelijk Museum, 23 July-20 September
Eeuwfeest Vincent van Gogh

1953 IJmuiden Hoogovens, October
Vincent van Gogh. Exposition in the canteens of the Royal Netherlands Blast Furnaces and Steelworks
BSM

1953 Assen Provinciehuis, 6-29 November
Vincent van Gogh in Assen
BSM

1953-54 Saint Louis City Art Museum of Saint Louis, 17 October-13 December; Philadelphia Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2 January-28 February; Toledo The Toledo Museum of Art, 7 March-30 April
Vincent van Gogh 1853-1890

1953-54 Bergen op Zoom Town Hall, 23 December-10 January
Vincent van Gogh
BSM

1954 Rotterdam Museum Boijmans, 10 July-20 September
Vier eeuwen stilleven in Frankrijk

1954 Zürich Kunsthaus Zürich, 9 October-21 November
Vincent van Gogh

1954-55 Bern Kunstmuseum Bern, 27 November-30 January
Vincent van Gogh

1954-55 Willemstad Curaçaosch Museum, 19 December-15 January
Vincent van Gogh

1955 Palm Beach Society of the Four Arts, 21 January-13 February; Miami Lowe Gallery of the University of Miami, 24 February-20 March; New Orleans Isaac Delgado Museum, 27 March-20 April
Vincent van Gogh 1853-1890

1955 New York Wildenstein, 24 March-30 April
Vincent van Gogh loan exhibition

1955 Antwerp Feestzaal, 7 May-19 June
Vincent van Gogh

1955 Amsterdam Stedelijk Museum, 24 June-September
Vincent van Gogh

1955 Dordrecht Dordrechts Museum, 16 July-31 August
Boom, bloem en plant. Nederlandse meesters uit vijf eeuwen

1955-56 Liverpool The Walker Art Gallery, 29 October-10 December; Manchester Manchester City Art Gallery, 17 December-4 February; Newcastle-upon-Tyne Laing Art Gallery, 11 February-24 March
Vincent van Gogh. Paintings & drawings, mainly from the collection of Ir. V.W. van Gogh

1956 Leeuwarden Fries Museum, 14 April-13 May
Vincent van Gogh uit de collectie Ir. V.W. van Gogh, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam

1956 Breda Cultureel Centrum, 30 June-29 July
Confrontatie noord/zuid

1956-57 Rotterdam Volksuniversiteit, 21 December-3 January
Vincent van Gogh in Arles. Collection Ir. V.W. van Gogh

1957 Breda De Beyerd, 2-24 February
Vincent van Gogh

1957 Marseilles Musée Cantini, 12 March-28 April
Vincent van Gogh

1957 Bordeaux unknown location, 20 May-31 July
Bosch, Goya et le fantastique

1957 Kampen Koornmarktspoort, 27 July-1 September
Oog in oog. Nederlandse zelfportretten van Vincent van Gogh tot heden

1957-58 Stockholm Nationalmuseum, 5 October-22 November; Luleå Shoppingcenter, 4-19 December; Kiruna Norrmalmsskolan, 29 December-13 January; Umeå Länsmuseet, 18 January-2 February; Östersund Konstmuseet, 8-23 February; Sandviken Konsthallen, 27 February-11 March; Gothenburg Göteborgs Konsthallen, 15-30 March
Vincent van Gogh. Akvareller, teckningar, oljestudier, brev (cat. Stockholm, otherwise no cat. known)
b6783

1957-58 Leiden Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal, 9 November-16 December; Schiedam Stedelijk Museum, 21 December-27 January
Vincent van Gogh

1958 Deventer Museum 'De Waag', 31 January-20 February
Schilderijen van Vincent van Gogh
BSM

1958 Paris Musée National d'Art Moderne, 6 March-20 April
L'Art Hollandais depuis Van Gogh

1958 Mons Musée des Beaux-Arts, 22 March-5 May
Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890). Son art et ses amis

1958 Rotterdam Museum voor Land- en Volkenkunde, 6 September-19 October
Hiroshige. Herinneringstentoonstelling 1858-1958
IVGM

1958 La Louvière Musée des Arts et Métiers, 11-31 October
Retrospective Anna & Eugene Boch
BSM

1958-59 San Francisco The M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, 6 October-30 November; Los Angeles Los Angeles County Museum, 10 December-18 January; Portland The Portland Art Museum, 28 January-1 March; Seattle Seattle Art Museum, 7 March-19 April
Vincent van Gogh. Paintings and drawings
IVGM

1958-59 Paris Musée Cernuschi, November-February
Orient-occident. Rencontres et influences durant cinquante siècles d'art

1959 Boston Institute of Contemporary Art, 7 January-4 February; Milwaukee Milwaukee Art Center, 12 February-12 March; Columbus The Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, 20 March-20 April; Minneapolis Walker Art Center, 27 April-24 May
Paintings from the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

1959 Bordeaux Galerie des Beaux-Arts, 20 May-31 July
La découverte de la lumière des primitifs aux impressionnistes

1959 Aix-en-Provence Pavillon de Vendôme, 3 October-30 November
Vincent van Gogh en Provence

1959-60 Utrecht Centraal Museum, 18 December-1 February
Vincent van Gogh schilderijen en tekeningen, verzameling Ir. V.W. van Gogh

1960 Paris I Musée Jacquemart-André, February-May
Vincent van Gogh 1853-1890

1960 Bordeaux Galerie des Beaux-Arts, 20 May-31 July
L'Europe et la découverte du monde

1960 Den Helder Town Hall, 9-20 June
Title unknown
IVGM

1960 Cuesmes Ecoles Communales, 1-20 October
Exposition Vincent van Gogh. Oeuvres originales et la collection complète des reproductions d'oeuvres de Vincent

1960 London Marlborough Fine Art, October
Van Gogh selfportraits

1960 Paris II Institut Néerlandais, 9 November-17 December
Les amis de Van Gogh

1960-61 Montreal The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 6 October-6 November; Ottawa The National Gallery of Canada, 17 November-18 December; Winnipeg The Winnipeg Art Gallery, 29 December-31 January; Toronto The Art Gallery of Toronto, 10 February-12 March
Vincent van Gogh. Paintings-drawings / Tableaux-dessins

1960-61 Paris Musée National d'Art Moderne, 4 November-23 January
Les sources du XXe siècle : les arts en Europe de 1884 à 1914

1960-61 The Hague Gemeentemuseum, November-May?
Vincent van Gogh en zijn tijd
BSM

1961 Paris Musée Carnavalet, March-May
Paris vu par les maîtres de Corot à Utrillo

1961 Amsterdam Stedelijk Museum, 22 July-18 September
Polariteit. Het appolinische en het dionysische in de kunst

1961 Humlebæk Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, 28 October-3 December
Stedelijk Museum besoger Louisiana

1961-62 Baltimore The Baltimore Museum of Art, 18 October-26 November; Cleveland The Cleveland Museum of Art, 5 December-14 January; Buffalo Albright Art Gallery, 30 January-11 March; Boston Museum of Fine Arts, 22 March-29 April
Vincent van Gogh. Paintings, watercolors and drawings

1962 Paris Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, May-July
Cent ans de portrait 1860-1960

1962 Leiden Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, May-October
Naar wijder horizon: kaleidoscoop op ons beeld van de buitenwereld
BSM

1962-63 Pittsburgh Carnegie Institute, 18 October-4 November; Detroit Detroit Institute of Arts, 11 December-29 January; Kansas City William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art, Mary Atkins Museum of Fine Arts, 7 February-26 March
Vincent van Gogh. Paintings, watercolors and drawings

1963 UTICA Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, 17 February-31 March; NEW YORK Armory of the Sixty-ninth Regiment, 6-28 April
1913-1963. Armory Show 50th anniversary exhibition

1963 SHEFFIELD Graves Art Gallery, 21 April-19 May
Vincent van Gogh. Paintings and drawings

1963 AMSTERDAM Stedelijk Museum, 3 May-10 June; BADEN-BADEN Staatliche Kunsthalle, 14 June-4 August
Schrift en beeld/Art and writing/L'art et l'écriture/Schrift und Bild

1963 AMSTERDAM Stedelijk Museum, 6 July-29 September
150 jaar Nederlandse Kunst. Schilderijen, beelden, tekeningen, grafiek 1813-1963

1963 HUMLEBÆK Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, 24 October-15 December
Vincent van Gogh. Malerier og tegninger

1963 ANTWERP Koninklijke Academie voor Schone Kunsten, 9-31 December
Uitstraling van de Koninklijke Academie voor Schone Kunsten te Antwerpen 1863-1914

1964 WASHINGTON The Washington Gallery of Modern Art, 2 February-19 March; NEW YORK The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2 April-28 June
Vincent van Gogh. Paintings, watercolors and drawings

1964 RECKLINGHAUSEN Städtische Kunsthalle, 14 May-19 July
Torso, das Unvollendete als künstlerische Form

1964-65 DELFT Stedelijk Museum Het Prinsenhof, 19 December-24 January; ANTWERP Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 6 February-14 March
De schilder in zijn wereld. Van Jan van Eyck tot Van Gogh en Ensor

1965 CHARLEROI Palais des Beaux-Arts, 9 January-9 February; GHENT Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 19 February-28 March
Vincent van Gogh. schilderijen, aquarellen, tekeningen

1965 LISSABON Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, March-May
Un siècle de peinture française 1850-1950 / Um século de pintura francesa 1850-1950

1965 NUENEN Town Hall, 8-31 May
Vincent van Gogh. Schilderijen, aquarellen, tekeningen

1965 MARSEILLES Musée Cantini, 17 May-15 August
Expressionnisme Allemand 1900-1920

1965 BERLIN Haus am Waldsee, 26 September-31 October
Der Japonismus in der Malerei und Graphik des 19. Jahrhunderts

1965-66 STOCKHOLM Moderna Museet, 23 October-19 December; GOTHENBURG Götenborgs Konstmuseum, 30 December-20 February
Vincent van Gogh. Målningar, akvareller, teckningar

1966-67 DORDRECHT Dordrechts Museum, 17 December-12 February; ARNHEM Gemeentemuseum, 25 February-2 April
Nederlandse zelfportretten. Van Vincent van Gogh tot heden

1967 WOLFSBURG Stadthalle Wolfsburg, 18 February-2 April
Vincent van Gogh. Gemälde, Aquarelle, Zeichnungen

1967 GLASGOW The Scottish Arts Council, 21 October-11 November
A man of influence: Alex Reid 1854-1928

1968 TOKYO The National Museum of Modern Art, 7 September-27 October
Mutual influences between Japanese and Western arts

1968-69 LONDON Hayward Gallery, 23 October-12 January
Vincent van Gogh. Paintings and drawings of the Vincent van Gogh Foundation Amsterdam

1969 VLISSINGEN Town Hall, 4-26 October
Schilderijen uit het Stedelijk Museum te Amsterdam

1969-70 LOS ANGELES Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 14 October-1 December; SAINT LOUIS City Art Museum of Saint Louis, 20 December-1 February; PHILADELPHIA Philadelphia Museum of Art, 28 February-5 April [only paintings]
Vincent van Gogh. Paintings and drawings

1970 MUNICH Haus der Kunst, 7 March-10 May; PARIS Musée National d'Art Moderne, 26 May-27 July
Europäischer Expressionismus / l'Expressionnisme Européen

1970-71 BALTIMORE The Baltimore Museum of Art, 11 October-29 November; SAN FRANCISCO The M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, 11 December-31 January; NEW YORK The Brooklyn Museum, 14 February-4 April
Vincent van Gogh. Paintings and drawings

1971 SAARBRÜCKEN Saarland-Museum, Moderne Galerie, 6 May-6 June
Anna Boch und Eugène Boch. Werke aus den Anfängen der modernen Kunst

1971-72 PARIS Orangerie des Tuileries, 21 December-10 April
Vincent van Gogh. Collection du Musée National Vincent van Gogh à Amsterdam

1972 AMSTERDAM I Kunsthandel P. de Boer, 13 January-19 February
Nederland water/land. De relatie tussen land en water in de Nederlandse schilderkunst van 1500 tot nu

1972 BORDEAUX Musée des Beaux-Arts, 21 April-20 June
Vincent van Gogh. Collection du Musée National Vincent van Gogh à Amsterdam

1972 LONDON Fischer Fine Art Limited, June-July
A journey into the Universe of Art. From Courbet and Corot to Bacon, Moore and Lindner

1972 AMSTERDAM II Rijksmuseum, 6 June-6 August
André Bonger en zijn kunstenaarsvrienden Redon, Bernard, Van Gogh

1972 MUNICH Haus der Kunst, 16 June-30 September
Weltkulturen und moderne Kunst

1972-73 STRASBOURG Musée d'Art Moderne, 22 October-15 January; BERN Kunstmuseum Bern, 25 January-15 April
Vincent van Gogh. Collection du Musée National Vincent van Gogh à Amsterdam

1972-73 DORDRECHT Dordrechts Museum, 5 November-28 January
Mensen kijken : portretten uit vier eeuwen

1974-75 MILAN Palazzo Reale, 16 November-15 January
La ricerca dell'identità

1975 PARIS Institut Néerlandais, 14 May-29 June; AMSTERDAM Van Gogh Museum, 9 July-7 September
Oeuvres écrites de Gauguin et Van Gogh / Briefwisseling van Paul Gauguin en Vincent van Gogh

1976 NÜRNBERG Kunsthalle Nürnberg am Marientor, 28 May-26 September
Schuhwerke. Aspekte zum Menschenbild

1976-77 TOKYO The National Museum of Western Art, 30 October-19 December; KYOTO The National Museum of Modern Art, 6 January-20 February; NAGOYA The Aichi Prefectural Art Gallery, 24 February-14 March
Vincent van Gogh exhibition

1976-77 THE HAGUE Gemeentemuseum, 18 December-29 February
Licht door kleur

1977 DÜSSELDORF Städtische Kunsthalle, 27 May-10 July
Vom Licht zur Farbe – nachimpressionistische Malerei zwischen 1886 und 1912

1977-78 THE HAGUE Pulchri Studio, 26 November-8 January
De Haagse Kunstkring: werk verzameld 1891-1958 (no cat.)

1978 HAMBURG Hamburger Kunsthalle, 16 June-27 August
Das Bild des Künstlers – Selbstdarstellungen

1979 AMSTERDAM Van Gogh Museum, 8-28 March; TOKYO Odakyu Grand Gallery, 27 April-16 May; SAPPORO Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art, 20 May-10 June; HIROSHIMA The Hiroshima Prefectural Museum, 15 June-1 July; NAGOYA The Aichi Prefectural Art Gallery, 12-30 September
Nederlandse schilderkunst 1815-1914 / Dutch painting from the century of Van Gogh

1979-80 LONDON Royal Academy of Arts, 17 November-16 March
Post-Impressionism. Cross-currents in European painting

1979-80 TOKYO Sunshine Museum, 15 December-15 January; OSAKA Municipal Museum of Fine Arts, 22 January-10 February; FUKUOKA Art Museum, 15-28 February; return to TOKYO Sunshine Museum, 8 March-10 April
Ukiyo-e prints and the Impressionist painters, meeting of the east and the west

1980 WASHINGTON National Gallery of Art, 25 May-1 September
Post-impressionism. Cross-currents in European and American painting 1880-1906

1980 MONS Musée des Beaux-Arts, 3 October-30 November
Van Gogh et la Belgique

1981 TORONTO Art Gallery of Ontario, 24 January-22 March; AMSTERDAM Van Gogh Museum, 9 April-14 June
Vincent van Gogh and the birth of cloisonism

1983 AMSTERDAM Kunsthandel P. de Boer, 22 April-31 May; BRAUNSWEIG Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, 16 June-31 July
Niederländische Stilleben von Brueghel bis Van Gogh

1984 NEW YORK The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 18 October-30 December
Van Gogh in Arles

1984-85 COPENHAGEN Ordrupgaard, 12 December-10 February
Gauguin og Van Gogh i Kobenhavn i 1893/Gauguin and Van Gogh in Copenhagen in 1893

1985-86 TOKYO The National Museum of Western Art, 12 October-8 December; NAGOYA Nagoya City Museum, 21 December-2 February
Vincent van Gogh exhibition

1985-86 NIIGATA Niigata City Art Museum, 13 October-10 November; IWAKI Iwaki City Art Museum, 16 November-22 December; SHIMONOSEKI Shimonoseki City Art Museum, 4 January-11 February; AMAGASAKI Tsukashin Hall, 21 February-23 March; TOKYO The Seibu Museum of Art, 29 March-13 May
100 years of Dutch painting. Highlights from the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

1986 Osaka The National Museum of Art, 21 February-31 March
Vincent van Gogh from Dutch collections. Religion, humanity, nature

1987-88 Manchester Manchester City Art Gallery, 14 November-10 January; Amsterdam Van Gogh Museum, 24 January-13 March; New Haven Yale Centre for British Art, 6 April-29 May
Hard Times. Social realism in Victorian art

1988 Rome Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, 28 January-4 April
Vincent van Gogh

1988 Paris Musée d'Orsay, 2 February-15 May
Van Gogh à Paris

1988 Amsterdam Van Gogh Museum, 28 May-28 August
Neo-impressionisten: Seurat tot Struycken

1989 Verona Palazzo Forti, 7 July-10 October
Da Van Gogh a Schiele. l'Europa espressionista 1880-1918

1990 Amsterdam Van Gogh Museum, 30 March-29 July
Vincent van Gogh. Schilderijen

1990 Cologne Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, 6 April-1 July; Zürich Kunsthaus Zürich, 3 August-21 October
Landschaft im Licht. Impressionistische Malerei in Europa und Nordamerika 1860-1910

1990 Osaka Nabio Gallery, 13 April-23 May; Tokyo Tokyo Station Gallery, 2 June-26 August; Sydney Art Gallery of New South Wales, 10 September-31 October
Flowers and nature

1990 Yokohama Sogo Museum of Art, 6 June-1 July; Urasoe Urasoe Art Museum, 7 July-19 August; Fukuoka Fukuoka Art Museum, 29 August-24 September; Kobe Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, 10 October-11 November
Impressionismus in Deutschland

1990-91 Essen Museum Folkwang, 11 August-4 November; Amsterdam Van Gogh Museum, 16 November-18 February
Vincent van Gogh und die Moderne 1890-1914 / Vincent van Gogh en de moderne kunst 1890-1914

1990-91 Glasgow The Burrell Collection, 10 November-10 February; Amsterdam Van Gogh Museum, 1 March-26 May
The age of Van Gogh. Dutch painting 1880-1895 / De schilders van Tachtig. Nederlandse schilderkunst 1880-1895

1991 Antwerp Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 17 February-21 April
In dienst van de kunst. Antwerps mecenaat rond kunst van heden

1991 Nagoya Matsuzakaya Art Museum, 21 March-6 May; Nara Nara Prefectural Museum of Art, dates unknown; Hiroshima Hiroshima Museum of Art, dates unknown
The world of impressionism and pleinairism

1992 Kyoto Kyoto Museum of Art, 18 February-29 March; Tokyo Setagaya Museum of Art, 4 April-24 May
Vincent van Gogh and Japan

1992 London Barbican Art Gallery, 27 February-4 May
Van Gogh in England. Portrait of the artist as a young man

1992 Amsterdam Rijksmuseum, 25 April-26 July
Imitatie & inspiratie. De invloed van Japan op de Nederlandse kunst

1993 Amsterdam Van Gogh Museum, 10 September-14 November
Philippe Rousseau, 1816-1887

1993 Tokyo Seiji Togo Memorial Yasuda Kasai Museum of Art, 15 September-14 November
Vincent van Gogh and his time. Van Gogh & Millet from the Vincent van Gogh Museum and the H.W. Mesdag Museum

1994 Amsterdam Van Gogh Museum, 10 June-9 October
De Parijse zelfportretten van Van Gogh (no cat.)

1994 Essen Villa Hügel, 10 June-13 November
Paris – Belle Epoque

1994 Tokyo Seiji Togo Memorial Yasuda Kasai Museum of Art, 14 September-13 November
Vincent van Gogh and his time. Van Gogh & portraits from the Van Gogh Museum and the H.W. Mesdag Museum

1995 Hamburg Hamburger Kunsthalle, 17 March-28 May
Van Gogh. Die Parisener Selbstbildnisse

1995 Amsterdam Van Gogh Museum, 31 March-25 June; Vienna Kunstforum Wien, 24 August-19 November
In perfect harmony: schilderij + lijst 1850-1920 / In perfect harmony: Bild und Rahmen 1850-1920

1995 Tokyo Seiji Togo Memorial Yasuda Kasai Museum of Art, 14 September-13 November
Vincent van Gogh and his time. Landscapes from the Van Gogh Museum and the H.W. Mesdag Museum

1996 Ahlen Kunst-Museum, 18 February-14 April; Neuss Clemens Sels Museum, 28 April-23 June; Bonn August Macke Haus, 30 June-15 September
Aufbruch zur Farbe. Luministische Malerei in Holland und Deutschland

1996 Vienna Bank Austria Kunstforum, 28 February-27 May
Van Gogh und die Haager Schule

1996 Tokyo Seiji Togo Memorial Yasuda Kasai Museum of Art, 12 September-11 November
Vincent van Gogh and his time. Still lifes from the Van Gogh Museum and the H.W. Mesdag Museum

1996 Den Bosch Noordbrabants Museum, 15 September-24 November
De muze als motor

1997 Venice Palazzo Grassi, 16 March-13 July
Flemish and Dutch painting. From Van Gogh, Ensor, Magritte, Mondrian to contemporary artists

1997 Tokyo Seiji Togo Memorial Yasuda Kasai Museum of Art, 12 September-11 November
Vincent van Gogh and his time. Four seasons from the Van Gogh Museum and the H.W. Mesdag Museum

1998 Bern Kunstmuseum Bern, 27 February-26 April
Vincent van Gogh. Die Sonnenblumen von 1887 (no cat.)

1998-99 Enschede Rijksmuseum Twenthe, 19 September-11 April
De groote expressie. Schilderijen van Van Gogh, Bernard, Israels, Puvis de Chavannes, Van Rappard, Sluijters en Von Stuck uit het Van Gogh Museum (no cat.)

1998-99 Amsterdam Rijksmuseum, 19 September-2 May
Van Gogh te gast in het Rijksmuseum. Meesterwerken van het Van Gogh Museum (no cat.)

1998-99 Washington National Gallery of Art, 4 October-3 January; Los Angeles Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 17 January-16 May
Van Gogh's Van Goghs. Masterpieces from the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

1999 Atlanta High Museum of Art, 23 February-16 May; Seattle Seattle Art Museum, 12 June-29 August; Denver Denver Art Museum, 2 October-12 December
Impressionism. Paintings collected by European Museums

1999 Amsterdam Van Gogh Museum, 24 June-5 September
Theo van Gogh 1857-1891. Kunsthandelaar, verzamelaar en broer van Vincent

1999-2000 Paris Muséé d'Orsay, 27 September-9 January
Theo van Gogh 1857-1891. Marchand de tableaux, collectionneur, frère de Vincent

2000 Martigny Fondation Pierre Gianadda, 21 June-26 November
Van Gogh

2000-01 Detroit The Detroit Institute of Arts, 12 March-4 June; Boston Museum of Fine Arts, 2 July-24 September; Philadelphia Philadelphia Museum of Art, 22 October-14 January
Van Gogh. Face to face

2000-01 Amsterdam Van Gogh Museum, 20 October-11 February; Pittsburgh Carnegie Museum of Art, 7 April-29 July
Licht! Het industriële tijdperk 1750-1900. Kunst & wetenschap, technologie & samenleving / Light! The industrial age 1750-1900. Art & science, technology & society

2000-01 London The National Gallery, 1 November-28 January; Amsterdam Van Gogh Museum, 2 March-20 May; Williamstown The Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 16 June-8 September
Impression. Painting quickly in France 1860-1890 / Impressionisme. De vrijheid van de losse toets

2001 Saint Louis Saint Louis Art Museum, 17 February-13 May; Frankfurt am Main Städelsches Kunstinstitut, 8 June-2 September
Vincent van Gogh and the painters of the Petit Boulevard / Vincent van Gogh und die Maler des Petit Boulevard

2001 Norfolk Chrysler Museum of Art, 13 April-15 July
Vincent van Gogh in Paris. Masterpieces from the Van Gogh Museum (no cat.)

2001 Munich Kunstbau Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, 8 September-25 November
Pygmalions Werkstatt. Die Erschaffung des Menschen im Atelier von der Renaissance bis zum Surrealismus

2001-02 Chicago The Art Institute of Chicago, 22 September-13 January; Amsterdam Van Gogh Museum, 9 February-2 June
Van Gogh and Gauguin. The studio of the south / Van Gogh en Gauguin. Het atelier van het zuiden

2001-02 Washington The Phillips Collection, 22 September-13 January; Boston Museum of Fine Arts, 17 February-9 June
Impressionist still life

2001-02 Amsterdam Van Gogh Museum, 28 September-6 January
Vincent van Gogh tekeningen. Antwerpen & Parijs, 1885-1888

2002 Kochi The Museum of Art, 2 June-14 July; Utsunomiya Utsunomiya Museum of Art, 21 July-1 September; Kyoto The National Museum of Modern Art, 10 September-20 October; Tokyo Seiji Togo Memorial Sompo Japan Museum of Art, 26 October-8 December
Georges Seurat et le Néo-Impressionnisme 1885-1905

2002 Sapporo Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art, 5 July-25 August; Kobe Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art, 7 September-4 November
Vincent & Theo van Gogh

2002-03 Stockholm Nationalmuseum, 27 September-12 January; Copenhagen Statens Museum for Kunst, 22 February-25 May
Impressionismen og norden

2002-03 Treviso Casa dei Carraresi, 9 November-30 March
L'Impressionismo e l'età di Van Gogh

2003 Amsterdam I Van Gogh Museum, 14 February-15 June
De keuze van Vincent

2003 Riehen Fondation Beyeler, 30 March-10 August
Expressiv!

2003 Amsterdam II Van Gogh Museum, 27 June-12 October
Gogh Modern

2003 Tokyo Seiji Togo Memorial Sompo Japan Museum of Art, 20 September-14 December
Van Gogh and his contemporaries. Van Gogh and flowers. With special focus on his 'Sunflowers'

2004 Nagoya Nagoya City Art Museum, 16 April-13 June; Morioka Iwate Museum of Art, 22 June-15 August; Hiroshima Hiroshima Museum of Art, 24 August-17 October
Van Gogh, Millet and the Barbizon artists

2004-05 Humlebæk Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, 10 September-16 January; Riehen Fondation Beyeler, 27 February-22 May
Blomsten som billede. Fra Monet til Jeff Koons / Blumenmythos. Van Gogh bis Jeff Koons

2005 Washington National Gallery of Art, 20 March-12 June; Chicago The Art Institute of Chicago, 16 July-10 October
Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre

2005 Tokyo The National Museum of Modern Art, 23 March-22 May; Osaka The National Museum of Modern Art, 31 May-18 July; Nagoya The Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, 26 July-25 September
Van Gogh in context

2005-06 Amsterdam Van Gogh Museum, 5 October-5 February; Pittsburgh Carnegie Museum of Art, 26 March-27 August
Beestachtig mooi. Kijken naar dieren 1750-1900 / Fierce friends: artists & animals in the Industrial Era, 1750-1900

2005-06 Brescia Museo di Santa Giulia, 21 October-19 March
Gauguin Van Gogh. L'avventura del colore nuovo

2005-06 London The National Gallery, 20 October-29 January; Sydney Art Gallery of New South Wales, 17 February-14 May
Self portrait. Renaissance to contemporary

2006 Amsterdam Van Gogh Museum, 24 February-28 June
Van Gogh en Rembrandt (no cat.)

2006-07 Brescia Museo di Santa Giulia, 28 October-25 March
Turner e gli impressionisti: La grande storia paesaggio moderno in Europa

2006-07 Amsterdam Van Gogh Museum, 24 November-4 March; New York Neue Galerie, 23 March-2 July
Van Gogh en het expressionisme / Van Gogh and expressionism

2006-07 Budapest Szépmüvészeti Múzeum, 1 December-20 March
Van Gogh

2007 Stockholm Nationalmuseum, 22 February-27 May
Blomsterspråk

2007 Williamstown Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 3 June-3 September
Dutch dialogues (no cat.)

2007 Bilbao Museo de Bellas Arts, 9 July-30 September
Gonbidatua. La obra invitada. The guest work (no cat.)

2007-08 New York The Morgan Library & Museum, 28 September-6 January
Painted with words: Vincent van Gogh's letters to Emile Bernard

2007-08 Seoul Seoul Museum of Art, 24 November-16 March
Van Gogh. Voyage into the myth

2008 Amsterdam Rijksmuseum Schiphol, 9 April-7 July
Vincent van Gogh: de natuur van dichtbij / Vincent van Gogh: nature close-up (no cat.)

2008 Laren Singer Museum, 9 May-31 August
Van Gogh en Co

2008 Vienna Albertina, 5 September-7 December
Vincent van Gogh. Gezeichnete Bilder

2008-09 Marseilles Centre de la vieille charité, 16 September-11 January
Van Gogh – Monticelli

2008-09 New York Museum of Modern Art, 21 September-5 January; Amsterdam Van Gogh Museum, 13 February-7 June
Van Gogh and the colors of the night / Van Gogh en de kleuren van de nacht

2008-09 Münster Westfalisches Landesmuseum, 28 September-11 January
Orte der Sehnsucht. Mit Künstlern auf Reisen

2008-10 Cologne Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, 29 February-22 June; Florence Palazzo Strozzi, 11 July-28 September; Vienna Albertina, 11 September-10 January
Impressionismus – Wie das Licht auf die Leinwand kam

2009 Basel Kunstmuseum Basel, 26 April-27 September
Vincent van Gogh. Zwischen Himmel und Erde. Die Landschaften

2009-10 Cologne Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, 18 September-10 January
Vincent van Gogh: shoes. A painting as our guest

2009-10 Passariano Villa Manin, 26 September-7 March
L'età di Courbet e Monet

2010 LONDON Royal Academy of Arts, 23 January-18 April
The real Van Gogh: the artist and his letters

2010-11 HAARLEM Teylers Museum, 18 September-9 January; NIJMEGEN Museum Het Valkhof, 4 February-8 May
Mythen van het atelier

2010-11 TOKYO The National Art Center, 1 October-20 December; FUKUOKA Kyushu National Museum, 28 December-13 February; NAGOYA Nagoya City Art Museum, 22 February-10 April
Van Gogh. The adventure of becoming an artist

2010-11 ESSEN Museum Folkwang, 2 October-30 January
Bilder einer Metropole. Die Impressionisten in Paris

2010-11 ROME Complesso Monumentale del Vittoriano, 8 October-6 February
Vincent van Gogh. Timeless country – modern city

Literature

ABRAMS 1971 M.H. Abrams, *The mirror and the lamp. Romantic theory and the critical tradition*, London etc. 1971.

ALGEMEEN HANDELSBLAD 1929 'Drie onbekende zelfportretten van Vincent van Gogh', *Het Algemeen Handelsblad*, 13 December 1929.

AMSTERDAM 1905 exhib. cat. *Tentoonstelling van schilderijen en teekeningen door Vincent van Gogh*, Amsterdam (Stedelijk Museum) 1905.

AMSTERDAM 1926 exhib. cat. *Vincent van Gogh tentoonstelling ter gelegenheid van het internationale jeugdfeest der S.J.I.*, Amsterdam (Stedelijk Museum) 1926.

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Vincent van Gogh
Paintings
Volume 2
Antwerp & Paris
1885-1888
Van Gogh Museum

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The Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam is the custodian of more than 200 paintings by Vincent Van Gogh – the largest and most representative collection in the world. This is the second volume in a series of detailed catalogues of those paintings which, alongside the complete catalogue of Van Gogh's drawings, provide a unique opportunity to study and enjoy the works that form part of this premier collection.

Covering the periods that Van Gogh spent in Antwerp and Paris in the mid-1880s, the book focuses on 93 paintings, among them famous self-portraits, flower paintings and views of Montmartre. They reveal how, within a relatively short time, Van Gogh evolved from a Realist painter with an idealistic message into a true modernist who aimed to build on the achievements of the Impressionists. In doing so he also drew inspiration from a wide range of influences, such as the Provençal artist Adolphe Monticelli, the Neo-Impressionist movement and Japanese graphic art. As they examine these developments, the authors also dwell at length on the changes in Van Gogh's use of materials, which so exemplified his love of experiment and his quest for technical diversity.

By including a wealth of complementary works by Van Gogh (around 100) and other artists to create a rich and colourful context for the paintings central to this volume, this publication combines outstanding imagery with first-class scholarship to create an invaluable reference resource.

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Van Gogh Museum Amsterdam

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